

In the event, Hugh Montague had a great deal to say to me. By the first drink, I had begun to babble—the intoxication of having encountered this vocation which was a sport, a skill, and an open-air monastery for the soul, augmented by my successful lead that very afternoon, not to mention my felicitous connection with bourbon the night before, as well as the great (if hitherto unadmitted) release of knowing that Mr. Montague, fearsome godfather, would be gone tomorrow, had me nattering. I was ready to take vows never to betray the new discipline but Mr. Montague cut me off.

“Harry, I’m going to tell you something that will hurt. I advance it, however, for your benefit. I have kept a high opinion of you over these two weeks. You are going to make a good man and I respect that doubly in your case because you were dealt paltry cards in childhood. I gather your mother is tiny.”

“Yes.”

“And not wholly dependable, according to your father.”

“Not wholly.”

“Men work to develop their evil skills. Women—it is my belief—merely summon them.” When he saw my adolescent eyes were not within a hundred miles of the peak of this observation, he shrugged, and said, “When we know each other better we might trade a few anecdotes about our respective mothers”—he came to a full stop as if startled by himself—“although don’t count on it.”

“Yessir.”

“From now on, when we’re alone, you and I, I want you to call me by the name my associates employ. That name is Harlot. Not to be confused with Harlow, Jean Harlow, but *Harlot*.”

“Yessir.”

“One of the most persistent little questions over at Fogg Bottom is why Montague chose such a point of reference. Sooner or later, they all make the pilgrimage over to my good side and have the touching simplicity to ask directly. As if I were in haste to tell! Should we become exceptional friends, I’ll spill the beans. In twenty years.”

“Yes, Harlot.” I stopped. “It doesn’t sound right.”

“Never fear. You’ll get used to it.” He picked up the knuckles of a claw, twisted them apart without getting his fingertips

caught on the spurs, and proceeded with his lobster fork to pluck forth the meat.

"Harry, I'll present you with the worst first." He fixed me with his eyes. There would be no sliding off. "I want you to give up rock climbing."

He could as well have struck me in the face.

"Oh," I said. "Golly."

"It's not that you are bad. You are better than your physical skills. You have innate moxie. Of ten beginners one might instruct, I say you would probably come in second or third in the lot."

"Then why do I have to stop?" I paused. I dropped my voice. "Would I kill myself?"

"Probably not. Hurt yourself, certainly. But that's not my reason. It's more particular than that. Only the best of beginners should ever dream of going on. It's more than just a sport, you see, for brave ones like yourself." This was the first time anyone had ever called me brave.

"No," I said, "why? Why do you want me to quit?"

"It's an activity that insists on excellence. Harry, if you went on, it would take over your life. You could not rest. Whenever you failed on a climb, the memory would overpower every thought until you succeeded. Even among good people, that can be a terribly debilitating process. An addiction. One ends as a coward, a victim, or a mediocre monomaniac. It is like being an ex-alcoholic. One is able to contemplate nothing else."

I was sufficiently agitated to say to him, "I don't understand what you're saying." My voice must have been rude-edged for I could feel his annoyance. His disciplines as a pedagogue may have saved me from a few thrusts of his temper.

"All right then," he said, "we will go further. A man who acquires high competence in rock climbing is able to become the instrument of his own will. That's what we try to arrive at. That's what we're encouraged to desire from the year one. A child is taught not to soil his pants. His bowels become the instrument of his will. And as we grow older, we often feel emotions that are as low and obstreperous as the embarrassing necessity, if caught in public, to take a *drop*." He used the word as though that were the only acceptable synonym ever to employ. "None-

theless, we say to our good sphincter, so much the creature of our will, 'Tighten up, you fool.'

"Obviously rock climbing firms the upper regions of the will. But it's quite a process. And just as dangerous as black magic. For every fear we are ready to confront is equally open, you see, to the Devil. Should we fail, the Devil is there to soothe our cowardice. 'Stick with me,' he says, 'and your cowardice is forgiven.' Whereas, rock climbing, when well done, pinches off the Devil. Of course, if you fail, his nibs returns twofold. If you are not good enough then, you spend half your days getting the Devil out. That is marking time. And so long as we stay in place, Satan is more than satisfied. He loves circular, obsessive activity. Entropy is his meat. When the world becomes a pendulum, he will inhabit the throne."

"Maybe," I said, "I would know what I could climb and what I couldn't, and just stick with that."

"Never. You are half your father. That half is not going to rest. I could see from the first day that by one measure you were equal to the best rock climbers. You understood it. You knew you were in one damned awesome church, indeed the only one where religion comes close enough to Our Lord to give a little real sustenance."

"Yessir."

"There's a story I was told about some farfetched, terribly intense sect of Jewish people called Hasidim. They used to inhabit village ghettos in Russia and the Ukraine. It seems that one of their folk, a rabbi, was so devotional that he prayed to God forty times a day. Finally, after forty years, the rabbi grew impatient and said, 'God, I have loved You for so long that I want You to reveal Yourself to me. Why won't You reveal Yourself to me?' Whereupon God did just that. He revealed Himself. How do you think the rabbi reacted?"

"I don't know."

Harlot began to laugh. I had never heard him give a full laugh before. It gave a clue to why he had chosen his name. Inside him were more people than one would have thought. His laugh was all over the place. "Well, Harry, the good fellow dived right under the bed and began to howl like a dog. 'Oh, God,' the rabbi said, 'please do *not* reveal Yourself to me.' That, Harry, is

a useful story. Before all else, God is awesome. It's the first thing to know. If Christ had not been sent to us, no one would ever have gotten out of the cave. Jehovah was too much for all of us. There would have been no modern civilization."

"What about Egypt, or Greece and Rome? Didn't they take us out of the cave?"

"Harry, those cultures marked time. They were perfect examples of the obsessional. Devil's abodes, all three, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Don't be impressed by how beautiful they were. The Devil, you must never forget, is the most beautiful creature God ever made. Spiritually, however, those cultures did not choose to emerge from Plato's cave. It took Christ to come along and say, 'Forgive the sons for the sins of the fathers.' That's the day, Harry, that scientific inquiry was born. Even if we had to wait a millennium and more for Kepler and Galileo. So, follow the logic: Once the father begins to believe that his sons will not suffer for his acts of sacrilege, he grows bold enough to experiment. He looks upon the universe as a curious place, rather than as an almighty machine guaranteed to return doom for his curiosity. That was the beginning of the technological sleigh ride which may destroy us yet. The Jews, of course, having rejected Christ, had to keep dealing with Jehovah for the next two millennia. So they never forgot. God is awesome. 'Oh God, do not reveal Yourself to me. Not all at once!'"

He paused. He ordered another drink for each of us, Hennessey for himself, and Old Harper's, I recollect, for me. "Let us have an Old Harper's for Young Harry," he actually said to the waitress, and went right back to his disquisition on the awesome: "I suspect that God is with us in some fashion on every rock climb. Not to save us—how I detest that tit-nibbling psychology—God saves!—God at the elbow of all misbegotten mediocrities. As if all that God had to do was preserve the middling and the indifferent. No, God is not a St. Bernard dog to rescue us at every pass. God is near us when we are rock climbing because that is the only way we get a good glimpse of Him and He gets one of us. You experience God when you're extended a long way out beyond yourself and are still trying to lift up from your fears. Get caught under a rock and of course you want to howl like a dog. Surmount that terror and you rise

to a higher fear. That may be our simple purpose on earth. To rise to higher and higher levels of fear. If we succeed, we can, perhaps, share some of God's fear."

"His fear?"

"Absolutely. His fear of the great power He has given the Devil. There is no free will for man unless the Devil's powers were made equal on this embattled planet to the Lord's. That is why," he said, "I don't want you to continue rock climbing. The brute fact is that you don't have the exquisite skills that are necessary. So you will keep finding a little courage and losing it. You could end up like one of those monumentally boring golfers who work for years to improve their swing and never stop talking about it. Orotund blobs of narcissism."

"Okay," I said. Now I was angry. Awfully hurt but clearly angry.

"All this is not in disrespect for your feelings, but in true respect. I believe there is a place for you. It will make demands upon your courage, your intelligence, your will, and your wit. You will be tempted by the Devil at every turn. But you can, in my modest opinion, serve God. In a far better way, I propose, than as a rock climber."

Formidable were his gifts of transition. I had been shifted from the pits of an unexpected wound to a pitch of interest. "Are you saying what I suppose you are saying?"

"Of course. Your father asked me to spend my vacation looking you over as a prospect. Nothing less. I had other plans for these two weeks. But he said, 'More than anything, I want the boy to come aboard with us. Only, however, if you think he's right. It's too important a matter to be judged by my desires and affection.'"

"Did my father speak that way to you?"

"Most definitely."

"You told him I could come aboard?"

"Yesterday. By now, I know you better than your father does. You have nice gifts. I'll say no more. Your father is an enthusiast, and overextended, therefore, on occasion, in judgment, but I pride myself on a cold eye. You have qualities that your father, for all his splendid stuff, is lacking."

I was tempted to say, "There is nothing special about

me"—is that not the most painful cry one can utter in adolescence?—but now I was gifted with judgment. I kept my mouth shut.

"You're planning to go to Yale?"

"Yessir."

"I'd say, short of a collapse on entrance exams, it can be taken for granted you will get in. Yale is perfect. I call it Uncle Eli's Cabin."

I laughed.

"Oh, yes," said my new associate, Harlot, "part of the underground railway. One of the stations on the route. At least for a few." He made a face. "As an old Harvard man, I don't like to say this, but Yale is a touch niftier to our purposes. Harvard gets quiffy about recruitment. It's a stinking irony since half of our real people did happen to go there. Well, as I always say, trust a good fellow so long as he doesn't matriculate at Princeton."

Harlot held up his glass. We would drink to that. One knew all the merriment of drinking to the health of Annapurna as opposed to Nanda Devi. Then we shook hands and drove back to the Keep. In the morning, Harlot left. He would drop me a letter on a point of advice from time to time, but I was not to be in the same room with him again for several years.

4 | The rock climbing left its inheritance. In my senior year at St. Matthew's, I went from second shell to first on the 150-pound crew and rowed against St. Paul's and Groton. I passed my Entrance Boards with good marks and one full leap ahead of my now domiciled dyslexia. I won the one fistfight I had in my three years at prep school. I even worked out at wrestling

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Once it became obvious that *The Naked and The Dead* was going to be a best seller, and I would therefore receive that small fame which comes upon any young American who makes a great deal of money in a hurry, I remember that a depression set in on me. I was twenty-five, living in Paris with my first wife, Beatrice, and I had gone through a long leaky French winter in which I discovered once again that I knew very little and had everything still to learn. So I think I probably had been hoping *The Naked and The Dead* would have a modest success, that everyone who read it would think it was extraordinary, but nonetheless the book would not change my life too much. I wished at that time to protect a modest condition. Many of my habits, even the character of my talent, depended on my humility—that word which has become part of the void in our time. I had had humility breathed into me by the war. After four serious years of taking myself seriously at Harvard, the army gave me but one lesson over and over again: when it came to taking care of myself, I had little to offer next to the practical sense of an illiterate sharecropper. Sometimes I think courage is the most exhaustible of the virtues, and I used up a share of mine in getting through the war with my lip buttoned, since it took all of me to be at best a fair rifleman. No surprise then if I was a modest young man when it was all over. I knew I was not much better and I was conceivably a little less than most of the men I had come to know. At least a large part of me felt that way, and it was the part in command while I was writing *The Naked and The Dead*.

But once free of the army, I came back to some good luck. My first wife and I had saved some money during the war, and I did not have to work for a year. She believed in me and my family believed in me, and I was able to do my book. *The Naked and The Dead* flowed—I used to write twenty-five pages of first draft a week, and with a few weeks lost here and there, I still was able to

write the novel and rewrite it in fifteen months, and I doubt if ever again I will have a book which is so easy to write. When once in a while I look at a page or two these days, I like its confidence—it seems to be at dead center—"Yes," it is always saying, "this is about the way it is."

Naturally, I was blasted a considerable distance away from dead center by the size of its success, and I spent the next few years trying to gobble up the experiences of a victorious man when I was still no man at all, and had no real gift for enjoying life. Such a gift usually comes from a series of small victories artfully achieved; my experience had consisted of many small defeats, a few victories, and one explosion. So success furnished me great energy, but I wasted most of it in the gears of old habit, and had experience which was overheated, brilliant, anxious, gauche, grim—even, I suspect—killing. My farewell to an average man's experience was too abrupt; never again would I know, in the dreary way one usually knows such things, what it was like to work at a dull job, or take orders from a man one hated. If I had had a career of that in the army, it now was done—there was nothing left in the first twenty-four years of my life to write about; one way or another, my life seemed to have been mined and melted into the long reaches of the book. And so I was prominent and empty, and I had to begin life again; from now on, people who knew me would never be able to react to me as a person whom they liked or disliked in small ways, for myself alone (the inevitable phrase of all tear-filled confessions); no, I was a node in a new electronic landscape of celebrity, personality and status. Other people, meeting me, could now unconsciously measure their own status by sensing how I reacted to them. I had been moved from the audience to the stage—I was, on the instant, a man—I could arouse more emotion in others than they could arouse in me; if I had once been a cool observer because some part of me knew that I had more emotion than most and so must protect myself with a cold eye, now I had to guard against arousing the emotions of others, particularly since I had a strong conscience, and a strong desire to do just that—exhaust the emotions of others. If there I was, with two more-than-average passions going in opposed directions, I was obviously a slave to anxiety, a slave to the fear that I could measure my death with every evening on the town, for the town was filled with people who were wired with shocks for the small electrocution of oneself. It is exhausting to live in a psychic land-

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scape of assassins and victims: if once I had been a young man whom many did not notice, and so was able to take a delayed revenge—in my writing I could analyze the ones who neglected to look at me—now I came to know that I could bestow the cold tension of self-hatred, or the warmth of liking oneself again, to whichever friends, acquaintances, and strangers were weak, ambitious, vulnerable and in love with themselves—which must be of course half the horde of my talented generation.

This was experience unlike the experience I had learned from books, and from the war—this was experience without a name—at the time I used to complain that everything was unreal. It took me years to realize that it was my experience, the only one I would have to remember, that my apparently unconnected rat-scuttlings and ego-gobblings could be fitted finally into a drastic vision, an introduction of the brave to the horrible, a dream, a nightmare which would belong to others and yet be my own. Willy-nilly I had had existentialism forced upon me. I was free, or at least whatever was still ready to change in my character had escaped from the social obligations which suffocate others. I could seek to become what I chose to be, and if I failed—there was the ice pick of fear! I would have nothing to excuse failure. I would fail because I had not been brave enough to succeed. So I was much too free. Success had been a lobotomy to my past, there seemed no power from the past which could help me in the present, and I had no choice but to force myself to step into the war of the enormous present, to accept the private heat and fatigue of setting out by myself to cut a track through a new wild.

Now of course this way of describing my past has a protective elegance. I could as well have described the years which followed the appearance of *The Naked and The Dead* by saying that I traveled scared, excited, and nervous, ridden by the question which everyone else was ready to ask and which I was forever asking of myself: had this first published novel been all of my talent? Or would my next book be better?

In a sense, I may have tried to evade the question by writing *Barbary Shore*, but there was no real choice. If my past had become empty as a theme, was I to write about Brooklyn streets, or my mother and father, or another war novel (*The Naked and The Dead* Go to Japan) was I to do the book of the returning veteran when I had lived like a mole writing and rewriting seven hundred pages

in those fifteen months? No, those were not real choices. I was drawn instead to write about an imaginary future which was formed osmotically by the powerful intellectual influence of my friend Jean Malaquais, and by the books I had read, and the aesthetics I considered desirable, but *Barbary Shore* was really a book to emerge from the bombarded cellars of my unconscious, an agonized eye of a novel which tried to find some amalgam of my new experience and the larger horror of that world which might be preparing to destroy itself. I was obviously trying for something which was at the very end of my reach, and then beyond it, and toward the end the novel collapsed into a chapter of political speech and never quite recovered. Yet, it could be that if my work is alive one hundred years from now, *Barbary Shore* ~~will be considered the richest of my first three novels for it has in its high fevers a kind of insane insight into the psychic mysteries of Stalinists, secret policemen, narcissists, children, Lesbians, hysterics, revolutionaries~~ ^{may still be read for its} ~~has an air which for me is the air of our time, authority and nihilism stalking one another in the orgiastic hollow of this century. I suppose it is a mistake to indulge myself, but I would like to put in some pages of excerpts from the novel, because for people who like my work have read it, and yet much of my later writing cannot be understood without a glimpse of the odd shadow and theme-maddened light~~ *Barbary Shore casts before it* ~~light, a sense of authority and nihilism stalking one another through its pages through the middle of the century.~~ ^{stalking}

~~McLeod and...~~

Once I mentioned a girl with whom I had recently had an affair, and I shrugged and said, "But it didn't mean much. We got a little bored with each other, and drifted out of it."

McLeod gave his sly grin, the side of his mouth sucking on the imaginary candy drop. "You drifted out of it, eh?"

Irritably, I snapped, "I drifted out of it. Didn't you ever hear of anything like that?"

"Yes. I've heard of it. I hear it all the time. People are always drifting in and out of things." He leaned back on the bed and

ridiculous. "Fine. Only you see, Lovett, I could never let it go at that. The old dependable mechanisms would start working in me. I'd begin operating. You know what I mean? I'd do everything in my power to make the girl love me—when you think of the genius I've squandered in bed. And sure enough there'd be the times when I'd talk her into being in love, when I'd worry her to death until there was never a man in the world who made love like me." He coughed. "But once she admitted that . . . Hm! I was getting bored. I thought it was time we drifted apart." He laughed again, at himself and at me. "Why, when the little lady would suggest marriage you should have seen me go into my act. 'You're waltzing on the bargain,' I would tell her, 'I'm disappointed in you. How could you have betrayed me so?'" Once more he roared with laughter. "Oh, there was a devilish mechanism in it. You see, she betrayed me, you got it, she betrayed me, and it was time for us to drift apart."

FROM BARBARA STONE

McLeod and Hollingsworth

I was watching McLeod. He sat back in his chair and studied what Hollingsworth had written. From time to time he chuckled without amusement. Then he passed me the pad, and I read it with my heart beating stupidly. Hollingsworth had made the following list:

- Admits to being Bolshevik.
- Admits to being Communist.
- Admits to being atheist.
- Admits to blowing up churches.
- Admits to being against free enterprise.
- Admits to encouraging violence.
- Advocates murder of President and Congress.
- Advocates destruction of the South.
- Advocates use of poison.
- Advocates rise of the colored people.
- Admits allegiance to a foreign power.
- Is Against Wall Street.

Silently, I handed the pad back to McLeod. In a flat voice, not with mockery, he said to Hollingsworth, "You made a mistake. I never advocate the use of poison."

Hollingsworth had recovered. Diffidently, but not without firmness, he shook his head. "I'm sorry, I don't like to disagree with a fellow, but you did say that. I heard you."

McLeod shrugged. "All right, leave it in." He took a long puff at his cigarette. "Tell me, old man," he drawled, "is there anything else I can do for you?"

Guinevere

A jewel. But set in brass. This morning she had sported a house dress and covered it with a bathrobe. Her red hair, with which undoubtedly she was always experimenting, had been merely blowzy and flew out in all directions from her head. Yet there had been opera pumps on her feet, her nails had been painted, her lipstick was fresh. She was a house whose lawn was landscaped and whose kitchen was on fire. I would not have been startled if she had turned around and like the half-dressed queen in the girlie show: surprise! her buttocks are exposed.

~~Guinevere's Movie~~ The Great American Soap Opera

"I've been trying to make up my mind which stars ought to play it, but so far I'm not sure, although I suppose they decide it all in Hollywood anyway. Just to think about it gets me excited.

"Here," she offered. "It takes place in this city in New York State, and the main characters are a doctor, a real good-looking guy with a mustache, big you know, and his nurse, she looks like some

of those blonde stars, and then he's got a girl friend, a dark-haired girl, any feature player could do that part." Guinevere lit a cigarette. "Now, this guy, the doctor, he's a pretty good guy, good heart and so forth, and he's a wow with the women. He's got the biggest whang on him in the whole town, and maybe he don't know it. He's got dozens of girl friends, and there isn't one of them who won't surrender herself to him, you know. But he's got a favorite, the blonde star one, his nurse, and she's a good kid too, worked hard all her life, and she goes for him. You know she's really in love, but she don't show it, puts up a tough front." Guinevere sighed with content. "Now the other one is a society girl, hoity-toity, and she comes to see him about something or other, woman trouble maybe, and he seduces her in his medical chambers, and they really tie a can on. You know for weeks he just goes around with her, to night clubs and to the beach, the country club, and he can't get her out of his system, it's chemical. Only all the time, at the same time, he still keeps the nurse on the string, and they get together once in a while, and it's love with them, it's just passion with the other."

"That is," I interposed, "it's the blonde star one he's really in love with?"

"Yeah." Without missing a breath, she continued. "Well, all this time, there's been a hullabaloo with the brunette society one's parents, you know they don't like the doctor because he's also from lowly origin like the nurse. But there's nothing they can do, it's real flaming youth." She halted, and murmured in aside, "Some of this I'm drawing from my own experiences." Guinevere tapped the ash from her cigarette. "Well, this goes on for a while and there's a climax. One night just for the hell of it he has one on the house with the society gal, and she gets pregnant. Only in the meantime before she finds out, he's decided that he's really more interested in the nurse, and they're thinking of getting married. When the society girl comes in, you know, knocked up, he talks to her for a while and convinces her he's not in love, and that she ought to have an operation. And so here's the first big scene. The doctor makes an operation on this dame he's had a hot affair with, and the nurse, the woman he's in love with, assists him right at it. I mean you see how this would make a movie even though they'd have trouble with such a scene. I imagine they could work it out though. She could have a brain tumor, or something of that nature. It would be a good scene the operation, you know with him giving directions to the nurse,

scalpel nurse, forceps nurse, sponge, acting cold because he's a good doctor, and he's got lots of responsibility." Guinevere stared at me blankly. "The operation turns out a failure. She isn't going to have the baby any more, but at the same time he does something, he makes a mistake, and the society girl can't make love any more. She looks perfectly okay, but she's crippled there, a beautiful girl and yet she can't do it any more. Well, when she finds out, she's mad, and she's going to expose him, but the nurse who's a wonderful character convinces him he ought to marry the society girl, and he does even though there can't be anything between them, and for a while they all keep living in the same town, and he keeps up his affair with the blonde nurse. They're still in love, and it's gotten very chemical like it used to be with the society girl, he goes down on her and everything, and she loves him. But the wife who's now turned out a bitch is going to expose him all over again, and so the nurse takes off and goes to New York, and the doctor gets richer and richer, fooling around with a lot of dames on the side, but his heart is still with the blonde nurse. Only they don't see each other for years." She stopped. "Guess what the ending's going to be?"

I was not to hear it so quickly. Guinevere went on developing wondrous detail upon detail; my attention flagged, and I listened indifferently. For Monina stood in the hall entrance performing a dance. The child was still nude, but somewhere she had picked up a coaster for a highball glass, and now in a posture of unbelievable provocation, she held it like a fig leaf, writhing her limbs sinuously through a parody of amorous advance and retreat. She would approach a few steps, her blonde head cocked to one side in sensuous repose as if she were stirred by an exotic music, and then abruptly with a tiny pout upon her lips, she would draw back, an attitude of feigned horror in the pose of her limbs. As her mother spoke she danced silently, an interpreter. The story drew to a close, and with it the dance. Monina reclined against the doorway, her arm caressing her thigh. She never looked in my direction, yet everything was done for me. Her blonde eyelashes fluttered upon her cheek, her eyes opened to gaze boldly at the wall. And all the while, Guinevere, unheeding, continued to talk.

"They meet again in New York, just about a year ago, the nurse and the doctor, and the doctor's wife is dead, and whammo do they get together. I mean drinking and making love, nothing can stop them. And the nurse doesn't tell him about that baby she had

from him after she left cause she knows he won't believe her; he'll think it belongs to some other guy. And the doctor wants to get married, and she holds him off cause she doesn't know what to do with the kid. And then what do you think, she can't tell him so she murders the kid, her own child, and she's caught, and the doctor too. I forgot to say he made out the death certificate cause she brought him in on it at the end, and then in prison, which'll be the last chapter, they're brought together for a final hour by the warden who's a pretty good guy, and there in the cell behind the bars they have a last one that really makes it worth while being killed."

And Monina, resolving the chord, ran toward me on tiptoe, nude nymph, halted within the reach of my arm, and in a child's counterfeit of a leer raised the fig leaf above her head, exposed and triumphant.

For the first time she stared at me as though I were real.

In the next instant a look of confusion mounted upon her face, deepened into terror. Abruptly, her mouth crumpled, her eyebrows knotted, and she began to wail in panic. Within a minute she was hysterical.

Lannie and Hollingsworth

"I knew that if I didn't have something to drink I'd be ill, for how long may a bee live without nectar?" Lannie hugged herself, her thin arms protruding like stalks from the soiled cotton cuffs of her pajamas. And her voice suddenly hoarse, she said, "Lovett, you said you'd loan me some money."

I handed her two ten-dollar bills.

"Mikey's my banker," she said to Hollingsworth with an ironic gesture.

The sum of many small frustrations exploded for me. "I'm not your banker, and if you think I don't need that money, you're mistaken."

She danced out of her chair and over to where I sat on the sofa and pinched my cheek once. "He is a banker," she said to

Hollingsworth, "but he's a charming one, and though he suffers through investment, and the black hand of money grips his heart in the middle of the night, he cannot escape his desire to be charming, and so he must always raise bond issues for Bohemia and resent his fate." She whirled about with amusement. "Those are the worst bankers of all when they turn upon you."

I recognized without much elation that this performance was for Hollingsworth, and not a word of her speech, not a gesture in the dance of her limbs, was uninspired; she might have been a geisha tracing the ritual of the tea ceremony. And Hollingsworth sat and watched her, his buttocks seemingly suspended a millimeter above his seat, a polite look upon his face, an expression of mild curiosity in his eyes as if he would be the hick who has paid money and now watches the carnival girls strip their costumes. This is the magical evil of the big city, but he is wary of being taken in: "I come to see pussy," he says to his neighbor, "and I ain't seen pussy yet." He will smash the carnival booths if he is cheated. Perhaps he has come to be cheated.

"I would say," I offered, "that Ed Leroy here knows more about banking than I do."

The Secret Policeman Gives Advice

Hollingsworth adjusted the lamp so it shone equitably between them. In a gentle voice, he continued. "Now, unlike most people, I don't look down on such a fellow. We all have our different characters, and that's true. It's just that we mustn't be stubborn. You've been an unhappy man all your life, and you didn't want to admit it was your own fault. So you blame it on society, as you call it. That isn't necessary. You could have had a good time, you could still have a good time if you'd realize that everybody is like you, and so it's pointless to work for the future." His hand strayed over the desk. He might have been caressing the wood. "More modesty. We ain't equipped to deal with big things. If this fellow came to me and asked

my advice, I would take him aside and let him know that if he gives up the pursuits of vanity, and acts like everybody else, he'd get along better. 'Cause we never know what's deep down inside us"—Hollingsworth tapped his chest—"and it plays tricks. I don't give two cents for all your papers. A good-time Charley, that's myself, and that's why I'm smarter than the lot of you." His pale face had become flushed. "You can shove theory," he said suddenly. "Respect your father and mother."

McLeod's Soliloquy

"Think of it, you've got to make the imaginative reconstruction, don't forget you're dedicated to the land across the sea, you've come to understand finally the gory unremitting task of history and the imperfect men with whom you change it, and it's a whole choice, you tell yourself, with all the good and bad of one against all the bad and good of the other, until I can tell you it's with a gloomy but nonetheless delicious satisfaction that you hear about some particularly unpleasant piece of work by the side you're on because it's a test of yourself, and you don't shrink back. It's hard is it, well then make it harder, burn out the pap and the syrup and make yourself harder because it takes that; it takes all of that." He halted in the middle of the floor, looking at me expectantly with a puckering of his mouth. If there had been a glass of water in his hand, he would have swallowed it at a gulp. "And that's only the preliminary, because soon you know that it's all renounced for yourself, all the pleasures of the plump belly, and you're burned out, burned out for the generations to come, and so you can only drive yourself. Cannot you understand, you crippled prig," he shouted at my impassive face, "why we remained so long in a situation now reactionary and stoked fuel to the counterrevolution? You have no life, and so you do not know what it means to deny what has been the meaning of your life, for if you've been wrong, mark you now, if you've been wrong, then what of the decamillion of graves, and so you're committed, you're committed wholly, do you understand? And each

action you perform, can only confirm you further in your political position or what I would now call the lack of one, and there's only the nightmare of yourself if you're wrong, for you see it gets turned inside out and after a while the only path to absolution is to do more of the same so that you end up religious and climb to salvation on the steps of your crimes. And in all this, in all the activity and activity, do you dare lie awake and resurrect all the old tools of surplus value and accumulation and the exploitation of one class by another, or do you sink your teeth into the meat you're permitted, no private ownership and therefore . . . therefore therefore . . . I exist, therefore I am, and so there must be socialism, except that the weirdest statements go through your head, and once I jotted it down on a piece of paper, a perfectly ridiculous remark, 'The historical function of La Sovietica is to destroy the intellectual content of Marxism.' "

Lannie to Lovett's Ear

"Have you forgotten? Do you remember how the poorest of the poor used to be driven to the room where they were given death by gas? How was it done, and with what nobility do we all die? Let me tell you. The guards were chosen from a list, so they would come from the kitchen or standing before the gate with their gun at present arms, and they would all assemble in a room and an officer would give them orders, and each of them would rate an extra cup, and they would drink it and go to collect the prisoners who had been selected already by other men. And the prisoners would march along, and if one of them weighed a hundred pounds, he was a giant to the rest, and they would shuffle and smile and try to catch the guard's eye. And the guards were drunk, and you would be amazed how happy a man may feel at such a moment. For the comedy is about to begin. They come to the antechamber, a room with gray walls and without windows, and it's men to the right and women to the left and strip your clothes, but only a moment. The clothes off, the guards are driving them into the other

room, and smack their hands on skinny flesh and bony flesh, it's bag a tittle and snatch a twot, and they can smell them stinking all those naked people, while in the heart of their own pants it's sweet with brandy so slap an ass and laugh like mad while the naked go stumbling, screaming into the last room of them all. And there one might suppose they prepare to die. For, mark you, this has been a long road, and each step of the way they have been deceived.

"Yet my story is not done," she said, holding up a hand, her eyes clear, her speech distinct as though she were reciting before a mirror. "The guards have one more resource. As they are about to close the door to the last room, an announcement is made. The State in its infinite mercy will allow one of them to be saved, the strongest. The one who can beat the others will be given a reprieve. This declaration, although it is worthy of the State, is due actually to the genius of a single guard who has conceived it at the very moment. And so through a window the guards may watch while one naked pygmy tears the hair of another, and blood runs where one thought no blood was left, and half of them are dead and scream like pigs with the head down and waiting for the knife, and as they scratch and sob and bite each other's rind, the guards turn on the gas and roar like mad for the fools thought one would be saved and so ate each other.

"This is the world, Mickey. If there had been one who said, 'Let us die with dignity,' but they went choking into the gas with the blood of a friend in their mouth."

"It was too late then," I murmured.

"Listen, my friend," she said softly, "the grass waves, and we are lost again in childhood souvenir. It is too late now. Do you understand? There are no solutions . . . * All that is left is to love the fire."

~~Later, same scene, Lovett speaking.~~

~~"... what if I don't want to choose my prison?"~~

~~"You must, and gladly. That is the secret."~~

~~"No one will win," I told her. "They'll destroy each other. And that's what you really want to see."~~

~~Her expression had become remote. "Who knows what we do want? Perhaps all that is left is to love the fire."~~

The Cold War - ~~III~~ IV

Cancer and Culture



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1952

From *Adventures in Yoga*

135

THE MAN WHO STUDIED YOGA

I would introduce myself if it were not useless. The name I call her right will not be the name at the name I have tonight. For the moment, then, let me say that I am thinking of Sam Shrods. Of course, I study Sam Sam Shrods who is neither ordinary nor extraordinary, who is not young nor yet old, not tall nor short. He is sleeping, and it is to describe him now, for he is a man who prefers sleeping to not sleeping. He is a man who has just turned forty. If the crown of his head reveals a little bald spot, he has succeeded in conquering the enemy of a woman. He has generally when he is awake, and at least with straight, he appears friendly, and at least the fact is that like most of us, he is full of worry. A man who is pleased to find others are as unhappy as he is, and yet this is the worst of his ailment—he is a doctor man. For that matter, he would prefer to see a more equitable world, he seems skeptical and perhaps, he also is hurt in one, he wishes to be fixed. I will go even further. He has one serious worry—he is not fond of himself, he wishes he were better. He would like to free himself of worry, of the annoying necessity to talk about his friends, he would like to love people more, especially he would like to love his wife more, and to love his two daughters without the everlasting if worthless burden of his existence that they share his life in the busy web of domestic responsibilities and struggling for money.

How often he tells himself with resignation that he has the quality of a blind work man.

May I state that I do not dislike Sam Shrods, I would just call him disappointed in him. He has tried too many things and never with a whole heart. He has learned to be a doctor.

Unhappy Marriage

She says
these things

I drop
like dead
meat-balls.

1952

(136)

From Advertisements
for Myself
157-185

THE MAN WHO STUDIED YOGA

1.

I would introduce myself if it were not useless. The name I had last night will not be the same as the name I have tonight. For the moment, then, let me say that I am thinking of Sam Slovoda. Obligatorily, I study him, Sam Slovoda who is neither ordinary nor extraordinary, who is not young nor yet old, not tall nor short. He is sleeping, and it is fit to describe him now, for like most humans he prefers sleeping to not sleeping. He is a mild pleasant-looking man who has just turned forty. If the crown of his head reveals a little bald spot, he has nourished in compensation the vanity of a mustache. He has generally when he is awake an agreeable manner, at least with strangers; he appears friendly, tolerant, and genial. The fact is that like most of us, he is full of envy, full of spite, a gossip, a man who is pleased to find others are as unhappy as he, and yet—this is the worst to be said—he is a decent man. He is better than most. He would prefer to see a more equitable world, he scorns prejudice and privilege, he tries to hurt no one, he wishes to be liked. I will go even further. He has one serious virtue—he is not fond of himself, he wishes he were better. He would like to free himself of envy, of the annoying necessity to talk about his friends, he would like to love people more; specifically, he would like to love his wife more, and to love his two daughters without the tormenting if nonetheless irremediable vexation that they closet his life in the dusty web of domestic responsibilities and drudging for money.

How often he tells himself with contempt that he has the cruelty of a kind weak man.

May I state that I do not dislike Sam Slovoda; it is just that I am disappointed in him. He has tried too many things and never with a whole heart. He has wanted to be a serious novelist and now

merely indulges the ambition; he wished to be of consequence in the world, and has ended, temporarily perhaps, as an overworked writer of continuity for comic magazines; when he was young he tried to be a bohemian and instead acquired a wife and family. Of his appetite for a variety of new experience I may say that it is matched only by his fear of new people and novel situations.

I will give an instance. Yesterday, Sam was walking along the street and a bum approached him for money. Sam did not see the man until too late; lost in some inconsequential thought, he looked up only in time to see a huge wretch of a fellow with a red twisted face and an outstretched hand. Sam is like so many; each time a derelict asks for a dime, he feels a coward if he pays the money, and is ashamed of himself if he doesn't. This once, Sam happened to think, I will not be bullied, and hurried past. But the bum was not to be lost so easily. "Have a heart, Jack," he called after in a whiskey voice, "I need a drink bad." Sam stopped, Sam began to laugh. "Just so it isn't for coffee, here's a quarter," he said, and he laughed, and the bum laughed. "You're a man's man," the bum said. Sam went away pleased with himself, thinking about such things as the community which existed between all people. It was cheap of Sam. He should know better. He should know he was merely relieved the situation had turned out so well. Although he thinks he is sorry for bums, Sam really hates them. Who knows what violence they can offer?

At this time, there is a powerful interest in Sam's life, but many would ridicule it. He is in the process of being psycho-analyzed. Myself, I do not jeer. It has created the most unusual situation between Sam and me. I could go into details but they are perhaps premature. It would be better to watch Sam awaken.

His wife, Eleanor, has been up for an hour, and she has shut the window and neglected to turn off the radiator. The room is stifling. Sam groans in a stupor which is neither sleep nor refreshment, opens one eye, yawns, groans again, and lies twisted, strangled and trussed in pajamas which are too large for him. How painful it is for him to rise. Last night there was a party, and this morning, Sunday morning, he is awakening with a hangover. Invariably, he is depressed in the morning, and it is no different today. He finds himself in the flat and familiar dispirit of nearly all days.

It is snowing outside. Sam finally lurches to the window, and opens it for air. With the oxygen of a winter morning clearing his

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brain, he looks down six stories into the giant quadrangle of the Queens housing development in which he lives, staring morosely at the inch of slush which covers the monotonous artificial park that separates his apartment building from an identical structure not two hundred feet away. The walks are black where the snow has melted, and in the children's playground, all but deserted, one swing oscillates back and forth, pushed by an irritable little boy who plays by himself among the empty benches, swaddled in galoshes, muffler, and overcoat. The snow falls sluggishly, a wet snow which probably will turn to rain. The little boy in the playground gives one last disgusted shove to the swing and trudges away gloomily, his overshoes leaving a small animal track behind him. Back of Sam, in the four-room apartment he knows like a blind man, there is only the sound of Eleanor making breakfast.

Well, thinks Sam, depression in the morning is a stage of his analysis, Dr. Sergius has said.

This is the way Sam often phrases his thoughts. It is not altogether his fault. Most of the people he knows think that way and talk that way, and Sam is not the strongest of men. His language is doomed to the fashion of the moment. I have heard him remark mildly, almost apologetically, about his daughters: "My relation with them still suffers because I haven't worked through all my feminine identifications." The saddest thing is that the sentence has meaning to Sam even if it will not have meaning to you. A great many ruminations, discoveries, and memories contribute their connotation to Sam. It has the significance of a cherished line of poetry to him.

Although Eleanor is not being analyzed, she talks in a similar way. I have heard her remark in company, "Oh, you know Sam, he not only thinks I'm his mother, he blames me for being born." Like most women, Eleanor can be depended upon to employ the idiom of her husband.

What amuses me is that Sam is critical of the way others speak. At the party last night he was talking to a Hollywood writer, a young man with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm. The young man spoke something like this: "You see, boychick, I can spike any script with yaks, but the thing I can't do is heartbreak. My wife says she's gonna give me heartbreak. The trouble is I've had a real solid-type life. I mean I've had my ups and downs like all of humanity, but there's never been a shriek in my life. I don't know how to write shrieks."

On the trip home, Sam had said to Eleanor, "It was disgraceful. A writer should have some respect for language."

Eleanor answered with a burlesque of Sam's indignation. "Listen, I'm a real artist-type. Culture is for comic-strip writers."

Generally, I find Eleanor attractive. In the ten years they have been married she has grown plump, and her dark hair which once was long is now cropped in a mannish cut of the prevailing mode. But, this is quibbling. She still possesses her best quality, a healthy exuberance which glows in her dark eyes and beams in her smile. She has beautiful teeth. She seems aware of her body and pleased with it. Sam tells himself he would do well to realize how much he needs her. Since he has been in analysis he has come to discover that he remains with Eleanor for more essential reasons than mere responsibility. Even if there were no children, he would probably cleave to her.

Unhappily, it is more complicated than that. She is always—to use their phrase—competing with him. At those times when I do not like Eleanor, I am irritated by her lack of honesty. She is too sharp-tongued, and she does not often give Sam what he needs most, a steady flow of uncritical encouragement to counteract the harshness with which he views himself. Like so many who are articulate on the subject, Eleanor will tell you that she resents being a woman. As Sam is disappointed in life, so is Eleanor. She feels Sam has cheated her from a proper development of her potentialities and talent, even as Sam feels cheated. I call her dishonest because she is not so ready as Sam to put the blame on herself.

Sam, of course, can say all this himself. It is just that he experiences it in a somewhat different way. Like most men who have been married for ten years, Eleanor is not quite real to him. Last night at the party, there were perhaps half a dozen people whom he met for the first time, and he talked animatedly with them, sensing their reactions, feeling their responses, aware of the life in them, as they were aware of the life in him. Eleanor, however, exists in his nerves. She is a rather vague embodiment, he thinks of her as "she" most of the time, someone to conceal things from. Invariably, he feels uneasy with her. It is too bad. No matter how inevitable, I am always sorry when love melts into that pomade of affection, resentment, boredom and occasional compassion which is the best we may expect of a man and woman who have lived together a long time. So often, it is worse, so often no more than hatred.

They are eating breakfast now, and Eleanor is chatting about the party. She is pretending to be jealous about a young girl in a strapless evening gown, and indeed, she does not have to pretend altogether. Sam, with liquor inside him, had been leaning over the girl; obviously he had coveted her. Yet, this morning, when Eleanor begins to talk about her, Sam tries to be puzzled.

"Which girl was it now?" he asks a second time.

"Oh, you know, the hysteric," Eleanor says, "the one who was parading her bazooms in your face." Eleanor has ways of impressing certain notions upon Sam. "She's Charlie's new girl."

"I didn't know that," Sam mutters. "He didn't seem to be near her all evening."

Eleanor spreads marmalade over her toast and takes a bite with evident enjoyment. "Apparently, they're all involved. Charles was funny about it. He said he's come to the conclusion that the great affairs of history are between hysterical women and detached men."

"Charles hates women," Sam says smugly. "If you notice, almost everything he says about them is a discharge of aggression." Sam has the best of reasons for not liking Charles. It takes more than ordinary character for a middle-aged husband to approve of a friend who moves easily from woman to woman.

"At least Charles discharges his aggression," Eleanor remarks.

"He's almost a classic example of the Don Juan complex. You notice how masochistic his women are?"

"I know a man or two who's just as masochistic."

Sam sips his coffee. "What made you say the girl was an hysteric?"

Eleanor shrugs. "She's an actress. And I could see she was a tease."

"You can't jump to conclusions," Sam lectures. "I had the impression she was a compulsive. Don't forget you've got to distinguish between the outer defenses, and the more deeply rooted conflicts."

I must confess that this conversation bores me. As a sample it is representative of the way Sam and Eleanor talk to each other. In Sam's defense I can say nothing; he has always been too partial to jargon.

I am often struck by how eager we are to reveal all sorts of supposedly ugly secrets about ourselves. We can explain the hatred

we feel for our parents, we are rather pleased with the perversions to which we are prone. We seem determinedly proud to be superior to ourselves. No motive is too terrible for our inspection. Let someone hint, however, that we have bad table manners and we fly into a rage. Sam will agree to anything you may say about him, provided it is sufficiently serious—he will be the first to agree he has fantasies of murdering his wife. But tell him that he is afraid of waiters, or imply to Eleanor that she is a nag, and they will be quite annoyed.

Sam has noticed this himself. There are times when he can hear the jargon in his voice, and it offends him. Yet, he seems powerless to change his habits.

An example: He is sitting in an armchair now, brooding upon his breakfast, while Eleanor does the dishes. The two daughters are not home; they have gone to visit their grandmother for the weekend. Sam had encouraged the visit. He had looked forward to the liberty Eleanor and himself would enjoy. For the past few weeks the children had seemed to make the most impossible demands upon his attention. Yet now they are gone and he misses them, he even misses their noise. Sam, however, cannot accept the notion that many people are dissatisfied with the present, and either dream of the past or anticipate the future. Sam must call this "ambivalence over possessions." Once he even felt obliged to ask his analyst, Dr. Sergius, if ambivalence over possessions did not characterize him almost perfectly, and Sergius whom I always picture with the flat precision of a coin's head—bald skull and horn-rimmed glasses—answered in his German accent, "But, my dear Mr. Slovoda, as I have told you, it would make me happiest if you did not include in your reading, these psychoanalytical text-works."

At such rebukes, Sam can only wince. It is so right, he tells himself, he is exactly the sort of ambitious fool who uses big words when small ones would do.

2.

While Sam sits in the armchair, gray winter light is entering the windows, snow falls outside. He sits alone in a modern seat, staring at the gray, green, and beige décor of their living room. Eleanor was a painter before they were married, and she has arranged this room. It is very pleasant, but like many husbands, Sam resents it, resents the reproductions of modern painters upon the wall, the slender coffee table, a free-form poised like a spider on wire legs, its

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feet set onto a straw rug. In the corner, most odious of all, is the playmate of his children, a hippopotamus of a television-radio-and-phonograph cabinet with the blind monstrous snout of the video tube.

Eleanor has set the Sunday paper near his hand. Soon, Sam intends to go to work. For a year, he has been giving a day once or twice a month to a bit of thought and a little writing on a novel he hopes to begin sometime. Last night, he told himself he would work today. But he has little enthusiasm now. He is tired, he is too depressed. Writing for the comic strips seems to exhaust his imagination.

Sam reads the paper as if he were peeling an enormous banana. Flap after flap of newsprint is stripped away and cast upon the straw rug until only the Magazine Section is left. Sam glances through it with restless irritability. A biography of a political figure runs its flatulent prose into the giant crossword puzzle at the back. An account of a picturesque corner of the city becomes lost in statistics and exhortations on juvenile delinquency, finally to emerge with photographs about the new style of living which desert architecture provides. Sam looks at a wall of windows in rotogravure with a yucca tree framing the pool.

There is an article about a workingman. His wife and his family are described, his apartment, his salary and his budget. Sam reads a description of what the worker has every evening for dinner, and how he spends each night of the week. The essay makes its point; the typical American workingman must watch his pennies, but he is nonetheless secure and serene. He would not exchange his life for another.

Sam is indignant. A year ago he had written a similar article in an attempt to earn some extra money. Subtly, or so he thought, he had suggested that the average workingman was raddled with insecurity. Naturally, the article had been rejected.

Sam throws the Magazine Section away. Moments of such anger torment him frequently. Despite himself, Sam is enraged at editorial dishonesty, at the smooth strifeless world which such articles present. How angry he is—how angry and how helpless. "It is the actions of men and not their sentiments which make history," he thinks to himself, and smiles wryly. In his living room he would go out to tilt the windmills of a vast, powerful, and hypocritical society; in his week of work he labors in an editorial cubicle to

create spaceships, violent death, women with golden tresses and wanton breasts, men who act with their fists and speak with patriotic slogans.

I know what Sam feels. As he sits in the armchair, the Sunday papers are strewn around him, carrying their war news, their murders, their parleys, their entertainments, mummary of a real world which no one can grasp. It is terribly frustrating. One does not know where to begin.

Today, Sam considers himself half a fool for having been a radical. There is no longer much consolation in the thought that the majority of men who succeed in a corrupt and acquisitive society are themselves obligatorily corrupt, and one's failure is therefore the price of one's idealism. Sam cannot recapture the pleasurable bitterness which resides in the notion that one has suffered for one's principles. Sergius is too hard on him for that.

They have done a lot of work on the subject. Sergius feels that Sam's concern with world affairs has always been spurious. For example, they have uncovered in analysis that Sam wrote his article about the worker in such a way as to make certain it would be refused. Sam, after all, hates editors; to have such a piece accepted would mean he is no better than they, that he is a mediocrity. So long as he fails he is not obliged to measure himself. Sam, therefore, is being unrealistic. He rejects the world with his intellect, and this enables him not to face the more direct realities of his present life.

Sam will argue with Sergius but it is very difficult. He will say, "Perhaps you sneer at radicals because it is more comfortable to ignore such ideas. Once you became interested it might introduce certain unpleasant changes in your life."

"Why," says Sergius, "do you feel it so necessary to assume that I am a bourgeois interested only in my comfort?"

"How can I discuss these things," says Sam, "if you insist that my opinions are the expression of neurotic needs, and your opinions are merely dispassionate medical advice?"

"You are so anxious to defeat me in an argument," Sergius will reply. "Would you admit it is painful to relinquish the sense of importance which intellectual discussion provides you?"

I believe Sergius has his effect. Sam often has thoughts these days which would have been repellent to him years ago. For instance, at the moment, Sam is thinking it might be better to live the life of a worker, a simple life, to be completely absorbed with such

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necessities as food and money. Then one could believe that to be happy it was necessary only to have more money, more goods, less worries. It would be nice, Sam thinks wistfully, to believe that the source of one's unhappiness comes not from oneself, but from the fault of the boss, or the world, or bad luck.

Sam has these casual daydreams frequently. He likes to think about other lives he might have led, and he envies the most astonishing variety of occupations. It is easy enough to see why he should wish for the life of an executive with the power and sense of command it may offer, but virtually from the same impulse Sam will wish himself a bohemian living in an unheated loft, his life a catch-as-catch-can from day to day. Once, after reading an article, Sam even wished himself a priest. For about ten minutes it seemed beautiful to him to surrender his life to God. Such fancies are common, I know. It is just that I, far better than Sam, know how serious he really is, how fanciful, how elaborate, his imagination can be.

The phone is ringing. Sam can hear Eleanor shouting at him to answer. He picks up the receiver with a start. It is Marvin Rossman who is an old friend, and Marvin has an unusual request. They talk for several minutes, and Sam squirms a little in his seat. As he is about to hang up, he laughs. "Why, no, Marvin, it gives me a sense of adventure," he says.

Eleanor has come into the room toward the end of this conversation. "What is it all about?" she asks.

Sam is obviously a bit agitated. Whenever he attempts to be most casual, Eleanor can well suspect him. "It seems," he says slowly, "that Marvin has acquired a pornographic movie."

"From whom?" Eleanor asks.

"He said something about an old boy friend of Louise's."

Eleanor laughs. "I can't imagine Louise having an old boy friend with a dirty movie."

"Well, people are full of surprises," Sam says mildly.

"Look, here," says Eleanor suddenly. "Why did he call us?"

"It was about our projector."

"They want to use it?" Eleanor asks.

"That's right." Sam hesitates. "I invited them over."

"Did it ever occur to you I might want to spend my Sunday some other way?" Eleanor asks crossly.

"We're not doing anything," Sam mumbles. Like most men, he feels obliged to act quite nonchalantly about pornography. "I'll

tell you, I am sort of curious about the film. I've never seen one, you know."

"Try anything once, is that it?"

"Something of the sort." Sam is trying to conceal his excitement. The truth is that in common with most of us, he is fascinated by pornography. It is a minor preoccupation, but more from lack of opportunity than anything else. Once or twice, Sam has bought the sets of nude photographs which are sold in marginal bookstores, and with guilty excitement has hidden them in the apartment.

"Oh, this is silly," Eleanor says. "You were going to work today."

"I'm just not in the mood."

"I'll have to feed them," Eleanor complains. "Do we have enough liquor?"

"We can get beer," Sam pauses. "Alan Sperber and his wife are coming too."

"Sam, you're a child."

"Look, Eleanor," says Sam, controlling his voice, "if it's too much trouble, I can take the projector over there."

"I ought to make you do that."

"Am I such an idiot that I must consult you before I invite friends to the house?"

Eleanor has the intuition that Sam, if he allowed himself, could well drown in pornography. She is quite annoyed at him, but she would never dream of allowing Sam to take the projector over to Marvin Rossman's where he could view the movie without her—that seems indefinably dangerous. Besides she would like to see it, too. The mother in Eleanor is certain it cannot hurt her.

"All right, Sam," she says, "but you are a child."

More exactly, an adolescent, Sam decides. Ever since Marvin phoned, Sam has felt the nervous glee of an adolescent locking himself in the bathroom. Anal fixation, Sam thinks automatically.

While Eleanor goes down to buy beer and cold cuts in a delicatessen, Sam gets out the projector and begins to clean it. He is far from methodical in this. He knows the machine is all right, he has shown movies of Eleanor and his daughters only a few weeks ago, but from the moment Eleanor left the apartment, Sam has been consumed by an anxiety that the projection bulb is burned out. Once he has examined it, he begins to fret about the motor. He wonders if it needs oiling, he blunders through a drawer of household tools

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looking for an oilcan. It is ridiculous. Sam knows that what he is trying to keep out of his mind are the reactions Sergius will have. Sergius will want to "work through" all of Sam's reasons for seeing the movie. Well, Sam tells himself, he knows in advance what will be discovered: detachment, not wanting to accept Eleanor as a sexual partner, evasion of responsibility, etc. etc. The devil with Sergius. Sam has never seen a dirty movie, and he certainly wants to.

He feels obliged to laugh at himself. He could not be more nervous, he knows, if he were about to make love to a woman he had never touched before. It is really disgraceful.

When Eleanor comes back, Sam hovers about her. He is uncomfortable with her silence. "I suppose they'll be here soon," Sam says.

"Probably."

Sam does not know if he is angry at Eleanor or apprehensive that she is angry at him. Much to his surprise he catches her by the waist and hears himself saying, "You know, maybe tonight when they're gone . . . I mean, we do have the apartment to ourselves." Eleanor moves neither toward him nor away from him. "Darling, it's not because of the movie," Sam goes on, "I swear. Don't you think maybe we could . . ."

"Maybe," says Eleanor.

3.

The company has arrived, and it may be well to say a word or two about them. Marvin Rossman who has brought the film is a dentist, although it might be more accurate to describe him as a frustrated doctor. Rossman is full of statistics and items of odd information about the malpractice of physicians, and he will tell these things in his habitually gloomy voice, a voice so slow, so sad, that it almost conceals the humor of his remarks. Or, perhaps, that is what creates his humor. In his spare time, he is a sculptor, and if Eleanor may be trusted, he is not without talent. I often picture him working in the studio loft he has rented, his tall bony frame the image of dejection. He will pat a piece of clay to the armature, he will rub it sadly with his thumb, he will shrug, he does not believe that anything of merit could come from him. When he talked to Sam over the phone, he was pessimistic about the film they were to see. "It can't be any good," he said in his melancholy voice. "I know

it'll be a disappointment." Like Sam, he has a mustache, but Rossman's will droop at the corners.

Alan Sperber who has come with Rossman is the subject of some curiosity for the Slovodas. He is not precisely womanish; in fact, he is a large plump man, but his voice is too soft, his manners too precise. He is genial, yet he is finicky; waspish, yet bland; he is fond of telling long rather affected stories, he is always prepared with a new one, but to general conversation he contributes little. As a lawyer, he seems miscast. One cannot imagine him inspiring a client to confidence. He is the sort of heavy florid man who seems boyish at forty, and the bow ties and gray flannel suits he wears do not make him appear more mature.

Roslyn Sperber, his wife, used to be a schoolteacher, and she is a quiet nervous woman who talks a great deal when she is drunk. She is normally quite pleasant, and has only one habit which is annoying to any degree. It is a little flaw, but social life is not unlike marriage in that habit determines far more than vice or virtue. This mannerism which has become so offensive to the friends of the Sperbers is Roslyn's social pretension. Perhaps I should say intellectual pretension. She entertains people as if she were conducting a salon, and in her birdlike voice is forever forcing her guests to accept still another intellectual canapé. "You must hear Sam's view of the world market," she will say, or "Has Louise told you her statistics on divorce?" It is quite pathetic for she is so eager to please. I have seen her eyes fill with tears at a sharp word from Alan.

Marvin Rossman's wife, Louise, is a touch grim and definite in her opinions. She is a social welfare worker, and will declare herself with force whenever conversation impinges on those matters where she is expert. She is quite opposed to psychoanalysis, and will say without quarter, "It's all very well for people in the upper-middle area"—she is referring to the upper middle class—"but, it takes more than a couch to solve the problems of . . ." and she will list narcotics, juvenile delinquency, psychosis, relief distribution, slum housing, and other descriptions of our period. She recites these categories with an odd anticipation. One would guess she was ordering a meal.

Sam is fond of Marvin but he cannot abide Louise. "You'd think she discovered poverty," he will complain to Eleanor.

The Slovodas do feel superior to the Rossmans and the Sperbers. If pressed, they could not offer the most convincing ex-

planation why. I suppose what it comes down to is that Sam and Eleanor do not think of themselves as really belonging to a class, and they feel that the Sperbers and Rossmans are petit-bourgeois. I find it hard to explain their attitude. Their company feels as much discomfort and will apologize as often as the Slovdas for the money they have, and the money they hope to earn. They are all of them equally concerned with progressive education and the methods of raising children to be well adjusted—indeed, they are discussing that now—they consider themselves relatively free of sexual taboo, or put more properly, Sam and Eleanor are no less possessive than the others. The Slovdas' culture is not more profound; I should be hard put to say that Sam is more widely read, more seriously informed, than Marvin or Alan, or for that matter, Louise. Probably, it comes to this: Sam, in his heart, thinks himself a rebel, and there are few rebels who do not claim an original mind. Eleanor has been a bohemian and considers herself more sophisticated than her friends who merely went to college and got married. Louise Rossman could express it most soundly. "Artists, writers, and people of the creative layer have in their occupational ideology the belief that they are classless."

One thing I might remark about the company. They are all being the most unconscionable hypocrites. They have rushed across half the city of New York to see a pornographic film, and they are not at all interested in each other at the moment. The women are giggling like tickled children at remarks which cannot possibly be so funny. Yet, they are all determined to talk for a respectable period of time. No less, it must be serious talk. Roslyn has said once, "I feel so funny at the thought of seeing such a movie," and the others have passed her statement by.

At the moment, Sam is talking about value. I might note that Sam loves conversation and thrives when he can expound an idea.

"What are our values today?" he asks. "It's really fantastic when you stop to think of it. Take any bright talented kid who's getting out of college now."

"My kid brother, for example," Marvin interposes morosely. He passes his bony hand over his sad mustache, and somehow the remark has become amusing, much as if Marvin had said, "Oh, yes, you have reminded me of the trials, the worries, and the cares which my fabulous younger brother heaps upon me."

"All right, take him," Sam says. "What does he want to be?"

"He doesn't want to be anything," says Marvin.

"That's my point," Sam says excitedly. "Rather than work at certain occupations, the best of these kids would rather do nothing at all."

"Alan has a cousin," Roslyn says, "who swears he'll wash dishes before he becomes a businessman."

"I wish that were true," Eleanor interrupts. "It seems to me everybody is conforming more and more these days."

They argue about this. Sam and Eleanor claim the country is suffering from hysteria; Alan Sperber disagrees and says it's merely a reflection of the headlines; Louise says no adequate criteria exist to measure hysteria; Marvin says he doesn't know anything at all.

"More solid liberal gains are being made in this period," says Alan, "than you would believe. Consider the Negro—"

"Is the Negro any less maladjusted?" Eleanor shouts with passion.

Sam maneuvers the conversation back to his thesis. "The values of the young today, and by the young, I mean the cream of the kids, the ones with ideas, are a reaction of indifference to the culture crisis. It really is despair. All they know is what they don't want to do."

"That is easier," Alan says genially.

"It's not altogether unhealthy," Sam says. "It's a corrective for smugness and the false value of the past, but it has created new false value." He thinks it worth emphasizing. "False value seems always to beget further false value."

"Define your terms," says Louise, the scientist.

"No, look," Sam says, "there's no revolt, there's no acceptance. Kids today don't want to get married, and—"

Eleanor interrupts. "Why should a girl rush to get married? She loses all chance for developing herself."

Sam shrugs. They are all talking at once. "Kids don't want to get married," he repeats, "and they don't want not to get married. They merely drift."

"It's a problem we'll all have to face with our own kids in ten years," Alan says, "although I think you make too much of it, Sam."

"My daughter," Marvin states. "She's embarrassed I'm a dentist. Even more embarrassed than I am." They laugh.

Sam tells a story about his youngest, Carol Ann. It seems he had a fight with her, and she went to her room. Sam followed, he called through the door.

"No answer," Sam says. "I called her again, 'Carol Ann.' I was a little worried you understand, because she seemed so upset, so I said to her, 'Carol-Ann, you know I love you.' What do you think she answered?"

"What?" asks Roslyn.

"She said, 'Daddie, why are you so anxious?'"

They all laugh again. There are murmurs about what a clever thing it was to say. In the silence which follows, Roslyn leans forward and says quickly in her high voice, "You must get Alan to tell you his wonderful story about the man who studied yogi."

"Yoga," Alan corrects. "It's too long to tell."

The company prevails on him.

"Well," says Alan, in his genial courtroom voice, "it concerns a friend of mine named Cassius O'Shaugnessy."

"You don't mean Jerry O'Shaugnessy, do you?" asks Sam.

Alan does not know Jerry O'Shaugnessy. "No, no, this is Cassius O'Shaugnessy," he says. "He's really quite an extraordinary fellow." Alan sits plumply in his chair, fingering his bow tie. They are all used to his stories, which are told in a formal style and exhibit the attempt to recapture a certain note of urbanity, wit, and *élan* which Alan has probably copied from someone else. Sam and Eleanor respect his ability to tell these stories, but they resent the fact that he talks *at* them.

"You'd think we were a jury of his inferiors," Eleanor has said. "I hate being talked down to." What she resents is Alan's quiet implication that his antecedents, his social position, in total his life outside the room is superior to the life within. Eleanor now takes the promise from Alan's story by remarking, "Yes, and let's see the movie when Alan has finished."

"Sssh," Roslyn says.

"Cassius was at college a good while before me," says Alan, "but I knew him while I was an undergraduate. He would drop in and visit from time to time. An absolutely extraordinary fellow. The most amazing career. You see, he's done about everything."

"I love the way Alan tells it," Roslyn pipes nervously.

"Cassius was in France with Dos Passos and Cummings, he was even arrested with e.e. After the war, he was one of the founders

of the Dadaist school, and for a while I understand he was Fitzgerald's guide to the gold of the Côte D'Azur. He knew everybody, he did everything. Do you realize that before the twenties had ended, Cassius had managed his father's business and then entered a monastery? It is said he influenced T. S. Eliot."

"Today, we'd call Cassius a psychopath," Marvin observes.

"Cassius called himself a great dilettante," Alan answers, "although perhaps the nineteenth-century Russian conception of the great sinner would be more appropriate. What do you say if I tell you this was only the beginning of his career?"

"What's the point?" Louise asks.

"Not yet," says Alan, holding up a hand. His manner seems to say that if his audience cannot appreciate the story, he does not feel obliged to continue. "Cassius studied Marx in the monastery. He broke his vows, quit the Church, and became a Communist. All through the thirties he was a figure in the Party, going to Moscow, involved in all the Party struggles. He left only during the Moscow trials."

Alan's manner while he relates such stories is somewhat effeminate. He talks with little caresses of his hand, he mentions names and places with a lingering ease as if to suggest that his audience and he are aware, above all, of nuance. The story as Alan tells it is drawn overlong. Suffice it that the man about whom he is talking, Cassius O'Shaughnessy, becomes a Trotskyist, becomes an anarchist, is a pacifist during the second World War, and suffers it from a prison cell.

"I may say," Alan goes on, "that I worked for his defense, and was successful in getting him acquitted. Imagine my dolor when I learned that he had turned his back on his anarchist friends and was living with gangsters."

"This is weird," Eleanor says.

"Weird, it is," Alan agrees. "Cassius got into some scrape, and disappeared. What could you do with him? I learned only recently that he had gone to India and was studying yoga. In fact, I learned it from Cassius himself. I asked him of his experiences at Brahnaputh-thar, and he told me the following story."

Now Alan's voice alters, he assumes the part of Cassius and speaks in a tone weary of experience, wise and sad in its knowledge. "I was sitting on my haunches contemplating my navel," Cassius said to me, 'when of a sudden I discovered my navel under a

different aspect. It seemed to me that if I were to give a counter-clockwise twist, my navel would unscrew.'"

Alan looks up, he surveys his audience which is now rapt and uneasy, not certain as yet whether a joke is to come. Alan's thumb and forefinger pluck at the middle of his ample belly, his feet are crossed upon the carpet in symbolic suggestion of Cassius upon his haunches.

"Taking a deep breath, I turned, and the abysses of Vishtarni loomed beneath. My navel had begun to unscrew. I knew I was about to accept the reward of three years of contemplation. So,' said Cassius, 'I turned again, and my navel unscrewed a little more. I turned and I turned,' Alan's fingers now revolving upon his belly, "and after a period I knew that with one more turn my navel would unscrew itself forever. At the edge of revelation, I took one sweet breath, and turned my navel free.'"

Alan looks up at his audience.

"Damn,' said Cassius, 'if my ass didn't fall off.'"

4.

The story has left the audience in an exasperated mood. It has been a most untypical story for Alan to tell, a little out of place, not offensive exactly, but irritating and inconsequential. Sam is the only one to laugh with more than bewildered courtesy, and his mirth seems excessive to everyone but Alan, and of course, Roslyn, who feels as if she has been the producer. I suppose what it reduces to, is a lack of taste. Perhaps that is why Alan is not the lawyer one would expect. He does not have that appreciation—as necessary in his trade as for an actor—of what is desired at any moment, of that which will encourage as opposed to that which does not encourage a stimulating but smooth progression of logic and sentiment. Only a fool would tell so long a story when everyone is awaiting the movie.

Now, they are preparing. The men shift armchairs to correspond with the couch, the projector is set up, the screen is unfolded. Sam attempts to talk while he is threading the film, but no one listens. They seem to realize suddenly that a frightful demand has been placed upon them. One does not study pornography in a living room with a beer glass in one's hand, and friends at the elbow. It is the most unsatisfactory of compromises; one can draw neither the benefits of solitary contemplation nor of social exchange. There

is, at bottom, the same exasperated fright which one experiences in turning the shower tap and receiving cold water when the flesh has been prepared for heat. Perhaps that is why they are laughing so much now that the movie is begun.

A title, *The Evil Act*, twitches on the screen, shot with scars, holes, and the dust lines of age. A man and woman are sitting on a couch, they are having coffee. They chat. What they say is conveyed by printed words upon an ornately flowered card, interjected between glimpses of their casual gestures, a cup to the mouth, a smile, a cigarette being lit. The man's name, it seems, is Frankie Idell; he is talking to his wife, Magnolia. Frankie is dark, he is sinister, he confides in Magnolia, his dark counterpart, with a grimace of his brows, black from make-up pencil.

This is what the titles read:

FRANKIE: She will be here soon.

MAGNOLIA: This time the little vixen will not escape.

FRANKIE: No, my dear, this time we are prepared.

(*He looks at his watch.*)

FRANKIE: Listen, she knocks!

There is a shot of a tall blond woman knocking on the door. She is probably over thirty, but by her short dress and ribboned hat it is suggested that she is a girl of fifteen.

FRANKIE: Come in, Eleanor.

As may be expected, the audience laughs hysterically at this. It is so wonderful a coincidence. "How I remember Frankie," says Eleanor Slovoda, and Roslyn Sperber is the only one not amused. In the midst of the others' laughter, she says in a worried tone, obviously adrift upon her own concerns, "Do you think we'll have to stop the film in the middle to let the bulb cool off?" The others hoot, they giggle, they are weak from the combination of their own remarks and the action of the plot.

Frankie and Magnolia have sat down on either side of the heroine, Eleanor. A moment passes. Suddenly, stiffly, they attack. Magnolia from her side kisses Eleanor, and Frankie commits an indecent caress.

ELEANOR: How dare you? Stop!

MAGNOLIA: Scream, my little one. It will do you no good. The walls are soundproofed.

FRANKIE: We've fixed a way to make you come across.

ELEANOR: This is hideous. I am hitherto undefiled. Do not touch me!

The captions fade away. A new title takes their place. It says, *But There Is No Escape From The Determined Pair*. On the fade-in, we discover Eleanor in the most distressing situation. Her hands are tied to loops running from the ceiling, and she can only writhe in helpless perturbation before the deliberate and progressive advances of Frankie and Magnolia. Slowly they humiliate her, with relish they probe her.

The audience laughs no longer. A hush has come upon them. Eyes unblinking they devour the images upon Sam Slovoda's screen.

Eleanor is without clothing. As the last piece is pulled away, Frankie and Magnolia circle about her in a grotesque of pantomime, a leering of lips, limbs in a distortion of desire. Eleanor faints. Adroitly, Magnolia cuts her bonds. We see Frankie carrying her inert body.

Now, Eleanor is trussed to a bed, and the husband and wife are tormenting her with feathers. Bodies curl upon the bed in postures so complicated, in combinations so advanced, that the audience leans forward, Sperbers, Rossmans, and Slovodas, as if tempted to embrace the moving images. The hands trace abstract circles upon the screen, passes and recoveries upon a white background so illumined that hollows and swells, limb to belly and mouth to undescribables, tip of a nipple, orb of a navel, swim in giant magnification, flow and slide in a lurching yawing fall, blotting out the camera eye.

A little murmur, all unconscious, passes from their lips. The audience sways, each now finally lost in himself, communing hungrily with shadows, violated or violating, fantasy triumphant.

At picture's end, Eleanor the virgin whore is released from the bed. She kisses Frankie, she kisses Magnolia. "You dears," she says, "let's do it again." The projector lamp burns empty light, the machine keeps turning, the tag of film goes *slap-tap, slap-tap, slap-tap, slap-tap, slap-tap, slap-tap, slap-tap*.

"Sam, turn it off," says Eleanor.

But when the room lights are on, they cannot look at one another. "Can we see it again?" someone mutters. So, again, Eleanor knocks on the door, is tied, defiled, ravished, and made rapturous. They watch it soberly now, the room hot with the heat of their

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bodies, the darkness a balm for orgiastic vision. To the Deer Park, Sam is thinking, to the Deer Park of Louis XV were brought the most beautiful maidens of France, and there they stayed, dressed in fabulous silks, perfumed and wigged, the mole drawn upon their cheek, ladies of pleasure awaiting the pleasure of the king. So Louis had stripped an empire, bankrupt a treasury, prepared a deluge, while in his garden on summer evenings the maidens performed their pageants, eighteenth-century tableau of the evil act, beauteous instruments of one man's desire, lewd translation of a king's power. That century men sought wealth so they might use its fruits; this epoch men lusted for power in order to amass more power, a compounding of power into pyramids of abstraction whose yield are cannon and wire enclosure, pillars of statistics to the men who are the kings of this century and do no more in power's leisure time than go to church, claim to love their wives, and eat vegetables.

Is it possible, Sam wonders, that each of them here, two Rossmans, two Sperbers, two Slovodas, will cast off their clothes when the movie is done and perform the orgy which tickles at the heart of their desire? They will not, he knows, they will make jokes when the projector is put away, they will gorge the plate of delicatessen Eleanor provides, and swallow more beer, he among them. He will be the first to make jokes.

Sam is right. The movie has made him extraordinarily alive to the limits of them all. While they sit with red faces, eyes bugged, glutting sandwiches of ham, salami, and tongue, he begins the teasing.

"Roslyn," he calls out, "is the bulb cooled off yet?"

She cannot answer him. She chokes on beer, her face glazes, she is helpless with self-protecting laughter.

"Why are you so anxious, Daddie?" Eleanor says quickly.

They begin to discuss the film. As intelligent people they must dominate it. Someone wonders about the actors in the piece, and discussion begins afresh. "I fail to see," says Louise, "why they should be hard to classify. Pornography is a job to the criminal and prostitute element."

"No, you won't find an ordinary prostitute doing this," Sam insists. "It requires a particular kind of personality."

"They have to be exhibitionists," says Eleanor.

"It's all economic," Louise maintains.

"I wonder what those girls felt?" Roslyn asks. "I feel sorry for them."

"I'd like to be the cameraman," says Alan.

"I'd like to be Frankie," says Marvin sadly.

There is a limit to how long such a conversation may continue. The jokes lapse into silence. They are all busy eating. When they begin to talk again, it is of other things. Each dollop of food sops the agitation ¹²⁵when the movie has spilled. They gossip about the party the night before, they discuss which single men were interested in which women, who got drunk, who got sick, who said the wrong thing, who went home with someone else's date. When this is exhausted, one of them mentions a play the others have not seen. Soon they are talking about books, a concert, a one-man show by an artist who is a friend. Dependably, conversation will voyage its orbit. While the men talk of politics, the women are discussing fashions, progressive schools, and recipes they have attempted. Sam is uncomfortable with the division; he knows Eleanor will resent it, he knows she will complain later of the insularity of men and the basic contempt they feel for women's intelligence.

"But you collaborated," Sam will argue. "No one forced you to be with the women."

"Was I to leave them alone?" Eleanor will answer.

"Well, why do the women always have to go off by themselves?"

"Because the men aren't interested in what we have to say."

Sam sighs. He has been talking with interest, but really he is bored. These are nice pleasant people, he thinks, but they are ordinary people, exactly the sort he has spent so many years with, making little jokes, little gossip, living little everyday events, a close circle where everyone mothers the other by his presence. The womb of middle-class life, Sam decides heavily. He is in a bad mood indeed. Everything is laden with dissatisfaction.

Alan has joined the women. He delights in preparing odd dishes when friends visit the Sperbers, and he is describing to Eleanor how he makes blueberry pancakes. Marvin draws closer to Sam.

"I wanted to tell you," he says, "Alan's story reminded me. I saw Jerry O'Shaugnessy the other day."

"Where was he?"

Marvin is hesitant. "It was a shock, Sam. He's on the Bowery. I guess he's become a wino."

"He always drank a lot," says Sam.

"Yeah." Marvin cracks his bony knuckles. "What a stinking time this is, Sam."

"It's probably like the years after 1905 in Russia," Sam says.

"No revolutionary party will come out of this."

"No," Sam says, "nothing will come."

He is thinking of Jerry O'Shaugnessy. What did he look like? what did he say? Sam asks Marvin, and clucks his tongue at the dispiriting answer. It is a shock to him. He draws closer to Marvin, he feels a bond. They have, after all, been through some years together. In the thirties they have been in the Communist Party, they have quit together, they are both weary of politics today, still radicals out of habit, but without enthusiasm and without a cause. "Jerry was a hero to me," Sam says.

"To all of us," says Marvin.

The fabulous Jerry O'Shaugnessy, thinks Sam. In the old days, in the Party, they had made a legend of him. All of them with their middle-class origins and their desire to know a worker-hero.

I may say that I was never as fond of Jerry O'Shaugnessy as was Sam. I thought him a showman and too pleased with himself. Sam, however, with his timidity, his desire to travel, to have adventure and know many women, was obliged to adore O'Shaugnessy. At least he was enraptured with his career.

Poor Jerry who ends as a bum. He has been everything else. He has been a trapper in Alaska, a chauffeur for gangsters, an officer in the Foreign Legion, a labor organizer. His nose was broken, there were scars on his chin. When he would talk about his years at sea or his experiences in Spain, the stenographers and garment workers, the radio writers and unemployed actors would listen to his speeches as if he were the prophet of new romance, and their blood would be charged with the magic of revolutionary vision. A man with tremendous charm. In those days it had been easy to confuse his love for himself with his love for all underprivileged workingmen.

"I thought he was still in the Party," Sam says.

"No," says Marvin, "I remember they kicked him out a couple of years ago. He was supposed to have piddled some funds, that's what they say."

"I wish he'd taken the treasury," Sam remarks bitterly. "The Party used him for years."

Marvin shrugs. "They used each other." His mustache droops. "Let me tell you about Sonderson. You know he's still in the Party. The most progressive dentist in New York." They laugh.

While Marvin tells the story, Sam is thinking of other things. Since he has quit Party work, he has studied a great deal. He can tell you about prison camps and the secret police, political murders, the Moscow trials, the exploitation of Soviet labor, the privileges of the bureaucracy; it is all painful to him. He is straddled between the loss of a country he has never seen, and his repudiation of the country in which he lives. "Doesn't the Party seem a horror now?" he bursts out.

Marvin nods. They are trying to comprehend the distance between Party members they have known, people by turn pathetic, likable, or annoying—people not unlike themselves—and in contrast the immensity of historic logic which deploys along statistics of the dead.

"It's all schizoid," Sam says. "Modern life is schizoid."

Marvin agrees. They have agreed on this many times, bored with the petulance of their small voices, yet needing the comfort of such complaints. Marvin asks Sam if he has given up his novel, and Sam says, "Temporarily." He cannot find a form, he explains. He does not want to write a realistic novel, because reality is no longer realistic. "I don't know what it is," says Sam. "To tell you the truth, I think I'm kidding myself. I'll never finish this book. I just like to entertain the idea I'll do something good some day." They sit there in friendly depression. Conversation has cooled. Alan and the women are no longer talking.

"Marvin," asks Louise, "what time is it?"

They are ready to go. Sam must say directly what he had hoped to approach by suggestion. "I was wondering," he whispers to Rossman, "would you mind if I held onto the film for a day or two?"

Marvin looks at him. "Oh, why of course, Sam," he says in his morose voice. "I know how it is." He pats Sam on the shoulder as if, symbolically, to convey the exchange of ownership. They are fellow conspirators.

"If you ever want to borrow the projector," Sam suggests.

"Nah," says Marvin, "I don't know that it would make much difference."

5.

It has been, when all is said, a most annoying day. As Sam and Eleanor tidy the apartment, emptying ash trays and washing the few dishes, they are fond neither of themselves nor each other. "What a waste today has been," Eleanor remarks, and Sam can only agree. He has done no writing, he has not been outdoors, and still it is late in the evening, and he has talked too much, eaten too much, is nervous from the movie they have seen. He knows that he will watch it again with Eleanor before they go to sleep; she has given her assent to that. But as is so often the case with Sam these days, he cannot await their embrace with any sure anticipation. Eleanor may be in the mood or Eleanor may not; there is no way he can control the issue. It is depressing; Sam knows that he circles about Eleanor at such times with the guilty maneuvers of a sad hound. Resent her as he must, be furious with himself as he will, there is not very much he can do about it. Often, after they have made love, they will lie beside each other in silence, each offended, each certain the other is to blame. At such times, memory tickles them with a cruel feather. Not always has it been like this. When they were first married, and indeed for the six months they lived together before marriage, everything was quite different. Their affair was very exciting to them; each told the other with some hyperbole but no real mistruth that no one in the past had ever been comparable as lover.

I suppose I am a romantic. I always feel that this is the best time in people's lives. There is, after all, so little we accomplish, and that short period when we are beloved and triumph as lovers is sweet with power. Rarely are we concerned then with our lack of importance; we are too important. In Sam's case, disillusion means even more. Like so many young men, he entertained the secret conceit that he was an extraordinary lover. One cannot really believe this without supporting at the same time the equally secret conviction that one is fundamentally inept. It is—no matter what Sergius would say—a more dramatic and therefore more attractive view of oneself than the sober notion which Sam now accepts with grudging wisdom, that the man as lover is dependent upon the bounty of the woman. As I say, he accepts the notion, it is one of the lineaments of maturity, but there is a part of him which, no matter how harried by analysis, cannot relinquish the antagonism he feels that

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Eleanor has respected his private talent so poorly, and has not allowed him to confer its benefits upon more women. I mock Sam, but he would mock himself on this. It hardly matters; mockery cannot accomplish everything, and Sam seethes with that most private and tender pain: even worse than being unattractive to the world is to be unattractive to one's mate; or, what is the same and describes Sam's case more accurately, never to know in advance when he shall be undesirable to Eleanor.

I make perhaps too much of the subject, but that is only because it is so important to Sam. Relations between Eleanor and him are not really that bad—I know other couples who have much less or nothing at all. But comparisons are poor comfort to Sam; his standards are so high. So are Eleanor's. I am convinced the most unfortunate people are those who would make an art of love. It sours other effort. Of all artists, they are certainly the most wretched.

Shall I furnish a model? Sam and Eleanor are on the couch and the projector, adjusted to its slowest speed, is retracing the elaborate pantomime of the three principals. If one could allow these shadows a life . . . but indeed such life has been given them. Sam and Eleanor are no more than an itch, a smart, a threshold of satisfaction; the important share of themselves has steeped itself in Frankie-, Magnolia-, and Eleanor-of-the-film. Indeed the variations are beyond telling. It is the most outrageous orgy performed by five ghosts.

Self-critical Sam! He makes love in front of a movie, and one cannot say that it is unsatisfactory any more than one can say it is pleasant. It is dirty, downright porno dirty, it is a lewd slop-brush slapped through the middle of domestic exasperations and breakfast eggs. It is so dirty that only half of Sam—he is quite divisible into fractions—can be exercised at all. The part that is his brain worries along like a cuckolded burgher. He is taking the pulse of his anxiety. Will he last long enough to satisfy Eleanor? Will the children come back tonight? He cannot help it. In the midst of the circus, he is suddenly convinced the children will walk through the door. "Why are you so anxious, Daddie?"

So it goes. Sam the lover is conscious of exertion. One moment he is Frankie Idell, destroyer of virgins—take that! you whore!—the next, body moving, hands caressing, he is no more than some lines from a psychoanalytical text. He is thinking about the sensitivity of his scrotum. He has read that this is a portent of femininity in a

male. How strong is his latent homosexuality worries Sam, thrusting stiffly, warm sweat running cold. Does he identify with Eleanor-of-the-film?

Technically, the climax is satisfactory. They lie together in the dark, the film ended, the projector humming its lonely revolutions in the quiet room. Sam gets up to turn it off; he comes back and kisses Eleanor upon the mouth. Apparently, she has enjoyed herself more than he; she is tender and fondles the tip of his nose.

"You know, Sam," she says from her space beside him, "I think I saw this picture before."

"When?"

"Oh, you know when. That time."

Sam thinks dully that women are always most loving when they can reminisce about infidelity.

"That time!" he repeats.

"I think so."

Racing forward from memory like the approaching star which begins as a point on the mind and swells to explode the eyeball with its odious image, Sam remembers, and is weak in the dark. It is ten years, eleven perhaps, before they were married, yet after they were lovers. Eleanor has told him, but she has always been vague about details. There had been two men it seemed, and another girl, and all had been drunk. They had seen movie after movie. With reluctant fascination, Sam can conceive the rest. How it had pained him, how excited him. It is years now since he has remembered, but he remembers. In the darkness he wonders at the unreasonableness of jealous pain. That night was impossible to imagine any longer—therefore it is more real; Eleanor his plump wife who presses a pigeon's shape against her housecoat, forgotten heroine of black orgies. It had been meaningless, Eleanor claimed; it was Sam she loved, and the other had been no more than a fancy of which she wished to rid herself. Would it be the same today, thinks Sam, or had Eleanor been loved by Frankie, by Frankie of the other movies, by Frankie of the two men she never saw again on that night so long ago?

The pleasure I get from this pain, Sam thinks furiously.

It is not altogether perverse. If Eleanor causes him pain, it means after all that she is alive for him. I have often observed that the reality of a person depends upon his ability to hurt us; Eleanor as the vague accusing embodiment of the wife is different, alto-

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gether different, from Eleanor who lies warmly in Sam's bed, an attractive Eleanor who may wound his flesh. Thus, brother to the pleasure of pain, is the sweeter pleasure which follows pain. Sam, tired, lies in Eleanor's arms, and they talk with the cozy trade words of old professionals, agreeing that they will not make love again before a movie, that it was exciting but also not without detachment, that all in all it has been good but not quite right, that she had loved this action he had done, and was uncertain about another. It is their old familiar critique, a sign that they are intimate and well disposed. They do not talk about the act when it has failed to fire; then they go silently to sleep. But now, Eleanor's enjoyment having mollified Sam's sense of no enjoyment, they talk with the apologetics and encomiums of familiar mates. Eleanor falls asleep, and Sam falls almost asleep, curling next to her warm body, his hand over her round belly with the satisfaction of a sculptor. He is drowsy, and he thinks drowsily that these few moments of creature-pleasure, this brief compassion he can feel for the body that trusts itself to sleep beside him, his comfort in its warmth, is perhaps all the meaning he may ask for his life. That out of disappointment, frustration, and the passage of dreary years come these few moments when he is close to her, and their years together possess a connotation more rewarding than the sum of all which has gone into them.

But then he thinks of the novel he wants to write, and he is wide-awake again. Like the sleeping pill which fails to work and leaves one warped in an exaggeration of the ills which sought the drug, Sam passes through the promise of sex-emptied sleep, and is left with nervous loins, swollen jealousy of an act ten years dead, and sweating irritable resentment of the woman's body which hinders his limbs. He has wasted the day, he tells himself, he has wasted the day as he has wasted so many days of his life, and tomorrow in the office he will be no more than his ten fingers typing plot and words for Bamba the Venusian and Lee-Lee Deeds, Hollywood Star, while that huge work with which he has cheated himself, holding it before him as a covenant of his worth, that enormous novel which would lift him at a bound from the impasse in which he stifles, whose dozens of characters would develop a vision of life in bountiful complexity, lies foundered, rotting on a beach of purposeless effort. Notes here, pages there, it sprawls through a formless wreck of incidental ideas and half-episodes, utterly without shape. He has not even a hero for it.

One could not have a hero today, Sam thinks, a man of action and contemplation, capable of sin, large enough for good, a man immense. There is only a modern hero damned by no more than the ugliness of wishes whose satisfaction he will never know. One needs a man who could walk the stage, someone who—no matter who, not himself. Someone, Sam thinks, who reasonably could not exist.

The novelist, thinks Sam, perspiring beneath blankets, must live in paranoia and seek to be one with the world; he must be terrified of experience and hungry for it; he must think himself nothing and believe he is superior to all. The feminine in his nature cries for proof he is a man; he dreams of power and is without capacity to gain it; he loves himself above all and therefore despises all that he is.

He is that, thinks Sam, he is part of the perfect prescription, and yet he is not a novelist. He lacks energy and belief. It is left for him to write an article some day about the temperament of the ideal novelist.

In the darkness, memories rise, yeast-swells of apprehension. Out of bohemian days so long ago, comes the friend of Eleanor, a girl who had been sick and was committed to an institution. They visited her, Sam and Eleanor, they took the suburban train and sat on the lawn of the asylum grounds while patients circled about intoning a private litany, or shuddering in boob-blundering fright from an insect that crossed their skin. The friend had been silent. She had smiled, she had answered their questions with the fewest words, and had returned again to her study of sunlight and blue sky. As they were about to leave, the girl had taken Sam aside. "They violate me," she said in a whisper. "Every night when the doors are locked, they come to my room and they make the movie. I am the heroine and am subjected to all variety of sexual viciousness. Tell them to leave me alone so I may enter the convent." And while she talked, in a horror of her body, one arm scrubbed the other. Poor tortured friend. They had seen her again, and she babbled, her face had coarsened into an idiot leer.

Sam sweats. There is so little he knows, and so much to know. Youth of the depression with its economic terms, what can he know of madness or religion? They are both so alien to him. He is the mongrel, Sam thinks, brought up without religion from a mother half Protestant and half Catholic, and a father half Catholic

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and half Jew. He is the quarter-Jew, and yet he is a Jew, or so he feels himself, knowing nothing of Gospel, tabernacle, or Mass, the Jew through accident, through state of mind. What . . . whatever did he know of penance? self-sacrifice? mortification of the flesh? the love of his fellow man? Am I concerned with my relation to God? ponders Sam, and smiles sourly in the darkness. No, that has never concerned him, he thinks, not for better nor for worse. "They are making the movie," says the girl into the ear of memory, "and so I cannot enter the convent."

How hideous was the mental hospital. A concentration camp, decides Sam. Perhaps it would be the world some day, or was that only his projection of feelings of hopelessness? "Do not try to solve the problems of the world," he hears from Sergius, and pounds a lumpy pillow.

However could he organize his novel? What form to give it? It is so complex. Too loose, thinks Sam, too scattered. Will he ever fall asleep? Wearily, limbs tense, his stomach too keen, he plays again the game of putting himself to sleep. "I do not feel my toes," Sam says to himself, "my toes are dead, my calves are asleep, my calves are sleeping . . ."

In the middle from wakefulness to slumber, in the torpor which floats beneath blankets, I give an idea to Sam. "Destroy time, and chaos may be ordered," I say to him.

"Destroy time, and chaos may be ordered," he repeats after me, and in desperation to seek his coma, mutters back, "I do not feel my nose, my nose is numb, my eyes are heavy, my eyes are heavy."

So Sam enters the universe of sleep, a man who seeks to live in such a way as to avoid pain, and succeeds merely in avoiding pleasure. What a dreary compromise is life!

1952

four

~~Circumcision~~

They say
that
women
don't get
cancer
of the
cervix
as much
from Jewish
men.

They don't.

They give
it
to
Jewish
men.

You have
so many
poems
about
cancer.

OUR COUNTRY AND OUR CULTURE: A SYMPOSIUM

It's me
or
my readers.

1952

AFM

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Of the two pieces, the writing in "David Reisman Reconsidered" is probably less bad, because it was written later, and I was not trying for too much, and so here and there relaxed enough to say a few things well—the last few pages of section III are a good sample of this.

On the other hand, "The Meaning of Western Defense" is heavily and harshly written, and that is too bad, for the ideas are exciting if the reader can drill through to them. The piece is badly dated, and I'm wrong in a good many of my direct predictions, like many another political forecaster, but the article does point to the paradoxes of Western Defense and the logic of Russian foreign policy. For any conservative or liberal who has happened onto this book, "The Meaning of Western Defense" may be more to their serious enjoyment than anything else included, for if the insights lack the grace of Walter Lippmann's analyses, the approach is still a radical counterpart of Lippmann's nice sense of political force and contradiction.

After the piece, I've added a few remarks about Sputnik.

OUR COUNTRY AND OUR CULTURE: A SYMPOSIUM

I think I ought to declare straightaway that I am in almost total disagreement with the assumptions of this symposium. My answer, then, can hardly contribute much in an affirmative way, but perhaps it may serve the value of not allowing the question to be begged.

At any rate, one has to admit that the older American intellectuals and writers have changed their attitude toward this country and its culture. The New Criticism seems to have triumphed pretty generally, PR's view of American life is indeed partisan, and a large proportion of writers, intellectuals, critics—whatever we may care to include in the omnibus—have moved their economic luggage from the WPA to the Luce chain as a writer for *Time* or *Life* once

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tives. Every intellectual who is now "within" seems to regard his conversion as a result of the application of pure thought upon moral purity. The fact that there is a society outside himself which threatens, suggests, nudges, and promises is dismissed as mere mechanical leftism. It is considered the worst of bad taste to imply that the artist or intellectual who does not make his way "within" can find no community "without," and must suffer if he is first-rate the exercise of his abilities in obscurity, or if he is second-rate must incur the even more painful condition of being not at all chic.

Really, the history of the twentieth century seems made to be ignored. No one of the intellectuals who find themselves now in the American grain ever discuss—at least in print—the needs of modern war. One does not ever say that total war and the total war economy predicate a total regimentation of thought. Rather, it is suggested that society is too difficult to understand and history impossible to predict. It has become as fashionable to sneer at economics and emphasize "the human dilemma" as it was fashionable to do the reverse in the thirties. Economics is now for experts and the crisis of world capitalism is considered dull enough to be on a par with the proletarian novel. One never hears about the disappearance of the world market, nor is it polite to suggest that the prosperity of America depends upon the production of means of destruction, and it is not only the Soviet Union which is driven toward war as an answer to insoluble problems.

The symposium posed questions about mass culture and democratic society without seriously debating how much freedom there is to find the *effective* publication of one's ideas if they are dissenting ideas, without wondering whether democracy becomes more attenuated and may cease to exist when the war comes, and without considering how America may change in the future. Everything is viewed in a static way. We are democratic, we support the West, and the American artistic caravan is no longer isolated. The important work is to search out the healthy aspects of American life, and decide whether we can work with the movies.

I have said that none of the older American writers and intellectuals have produced anything of note since the war. The literary history of this last period has been made, for better or worse, by the younger writers, who seem inevitably to arrive as barbarians or decadents. Does not this, in itself, answer the question? John Aldridge in *After the Lost Generation* could come up

with only one prescription—a genius is needed. If and when he arrives may I speculate that he will be more concerned with “silence, exile, and cunning,” than a strapping participation in the vigors of American life. It is worth something to remind ourselves that the great artists—certainly the moderns—are almost always in opposition to their society, and that integration, acceptance, non-alienation, etc. etc., have been more conducive to propaganda than art.

1952

DAVID RIESMAN RECONSIDERED

The only review of *Individualism Reconsidered* by David Riesman (The Free Press, 1954) which I have seen up to this writing is a dithyrambic piece of Granville Hicks' in *The New Leader* of July 19, 1954. He concludes his appreciation by saying, “What I am sure of, however, is that this culture of ours, even if it should vanish from the earth, would survive in men's minds as an example of what the human race can accomplish. Among the forces which have forged that conviction must be included the writings of David Riesman.”

As I say, this is the only review I have read, but I can imagine the others, and it takes no talent for prophecy to assume that Hicks' review is typical. For there is no mistaking that Riesman is the professional liberal's liberal, and while I happen to have met no particular person who has been influenced by him, I have seen his name in many references, blurbs, and occasional columns, all exceptionally laudatory, by such intellectual deacons of the liberal body as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Max Lerner.

1.

After such a preface, it is little embarrassing to say that I found *Individualism Reconsidered* more boring than impressive. The book of five hundred odd pages, it is a collection of thirty essays which were published in various magazines in the last seven years.

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Getting to Know You

START

tionary Republic going into black leather, S.M., and kicking off
S.M. in public, defiling the flag, digging the hog
fence of a small town, and some throwers and
bushy and H.I. - chimney-biting. ICI - the moon goes, but
A... full of dread, could easily be TV. I... to
caden you, you need it.
There were legitimate feeling... had had
fiction or a line by then was... had the
education... Back in '45, I...
stoned on pot, wafted up and down on Seconal, jammed with ambi-
tion, terror, and the common lust to learn the secrets of the world
some easy way, the immersion into TV was profound. By it, one
could study the world, and the tricks of the world.

... would be examining...
I... Cassini who had a... for a while and it
hard... TV...
... a genuine article... well groomed, D...
... enough to... carry up and empty
... to find any topic of...
... The... Cassini's quest. Mailer would on
... put right... get a little...
... the... wanted.

Watching TV he

Or, studying the tourist... learned much about American fella-
tio. TV was scintillating for that. Next to the oil of...
... washing machine...
... the microphone.

A twinkle would light up in Steve Allen's eye as he
took the mike and cord down the aisle and in and out of impromptu
interviews with his audience, snaking the rounded knob right up to
the mouth of some starched skinny Middle West matron, lean as
whipcord, tense as rectitude, a life of iron disciplines in the vertical
wrinkles of the upper lip; the lady would bare her teeth in a snarl
and show a shark's mouth as she brought her jaws around to face
and maybe bite off that black dob of a knob so near to touching her
tongue.

A high school girl would be next, there with the graduating class
on a trip to New York, her folks watching back home. She would
swoon before the mike. She could not get her mouth open. She
would keep dodging in her seat, and Steve would stay in pursuit,
mike extended. Two nights ago she ^{had} dodged for two hours in the
back seat of a car. My God, this was in public.

A young housewife, liberal, sophisticated, happy to present her

congenial point of view, compliments Mr. Allen on the quality of his show. "We watch you regularly, Steve, and like to think we're not too far behind the times up in Norfolk, Connecticut. That's right, Norfolk, not Norwalk." Her mouth, which has regular lips, is held a regular distance from the microphone. She shows no difficulty with it, no more than she would have with a phallus; two fingers and a thumb keep the thing canted right. There can be nothing wrong, after all, in relations between consenting adults. So speaks her calm.

Then there is a big heavy-set man who owns a grain-and-feed store in Ohio. He prides himself on imperturbable phlegm, and some thrift with words. He is not quite aware of the mike. If a man came into his store and proceeded to expose himself, this proprietor would not see it right away. He might, after all, be explaining the merits and demerits of one feed-mix to another; since he chews no gum when he walks, neither does he offer attention to tangentialia as he talks. Now, singled out from the audience to be interviewed, he is stiffnecked, and responds only from that side of his mouth adjacent to the cheek on which Steve is asking the questions; he allows, "New York is a good place to visit, but, yessir, I'll be glad to start up for home," then, bla-looh! he sees it, black blimp-like little object! he blinks, he swallows, he looks at Steve: "I guess I've had my say, Mr. Allen," he says, and shuts up shop. Later he will tell a pinochle partner about the crazy people in New York. "Yes," the friend will acknowledge.

"You bet, Steve," says the next fellow, "I'm awfully glad you selected me. I've always wanted to talk to you." He is fully aware of the mike and what it portends. "Yes, yes, I'm a male secretary, love the work." "It doesn't bother you," asks Steve, "if people say, 'What is that, a male secretary, isn't it supposed to be women's work?'" "Oh, Steve, that doesn't bother me a bit. Here," he says, reaching for the mike. "Do you mind? I'm much more comfortable when I hold it."

"Help yourself," says Steve.

"Oh, I intend to," says the guest. "Life is a feast, and I think we should all get what we can, don't you?"

~~Tip: Walter, building dreams of future power in the darkness, saw it all. America was getting hip. In the center of marijuana was the secret of how to do it. You needed the audacity to take your step. In those days his life was simple, if much debilitated. Exhausted from watching The Beer Park, frantic from trying to do his columns~~

HOLLYWOOD - I

Herman Teppis at the Laguna Room

1952

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The Dear Book

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Chapter One

IN THE CACTUS WILD of Southern California, a distance of two hundred miles from the capital of cinema as I choose to call it, is the town of Desert D'Or. There I went from the Air Force to look for a good time. Some time ago.

Almost everybody I knew in Desert D'Or had had an unusual career, and it was the same for me. I grew up in a home for orphans. Still intact at the age of twenty-three, wearing my flying wings and a First Lieutenant's uniform, I arrived at the resort with fourteen thousand dollars, a sum I picked up via a poker game in a Tokyo hotel room while waiting with other fliers for our plane home. The curiosity is that I was never a gambler, I did not even like the game, but I had nothing to lose that night, and maybe for such a reason I accepted the luck of my cards. Let me leave it at that. I came out of the Air Force with no place to go, no family to visit, and I wandered down to Desert D'Or.

Built since the Second World War, it is the only place I know which is all new. A long time ago, Desert D'Or was called Desert Door by the prospectors who put up their shanties at the edge of its oasis and went into the mountains above the desert to look for gold. But there is nothing left of those men; when the site of Desert D'Or was chosen, none of the old shacks remained.

No, everything is in the present tense, and during the months I stayed at the resort, I came to know it in a way we can know few places. It was a town built out of no other obvious motive than

commercial profit and so no sign of commerce was allowed to appear. Desert D'Or was without a main street, and its stores looked like anything but stores. In those places which sold clothing, no clothing was laid out, and you waited in a modern living room while salesmen opened panels in the wall to exhibit summer suits, or held between their hands the blooms and sprays of a tropical scarf. There was a jewelry store built like a cabin cruiser; from the street one peeped through a porthole to see a thirty-thousand-dollar necklace hung on the silver antlers of a piece of driftwood. None of the hotels—not the Yacht Club, nor the Debonair, nor the Yucca Plaza, the Sandpiper, the Creedmor, nor the Desert D'Or Arms—could even be seen from outside. Put behind cement-brick fences or wooden palings, one hardly came across a building which was not green, yellow, rose, orange, or pink, and the approach was hidden by a shrubbery of bright flowers. You passed through the gate to the Yacht Club, the biggest and therefore the most exclusive hotel in the resort, and followed its private road which twisted through the grounds for several hundred yards, expecting a mansion at the end, but came instead to no more than a carport, a swimming pool in the shape of a free-form coffee table with curved-wall cabañas and canasta tables, and a set of lawn-tennis courts, the only lawn in all that part of Southern California. At night, along yellow sidewalks which crossed a winding artificial creek, lit up with Japanese lanterns strung to the tropical trees, you could wander by the guest bungalows scattered along the route, their flush pastel-colored doors another part of the maze of the arrangement.

I blew a piece of my fourteen-thousand-dollar fortune and stayed at the Yacht Club until I picked the house I was to rent for the rest of my stay in Desert D'Or. I could describe that house in detail, but what would be the use? It was like most of the houses in the resort; it was modern, ranch-style, of course, with light furniture and rugs which felt like poodle wool, and it had a garden and a wall which went around the garden, the standard fault of Desert D'Or architecture; along the desert table, the walls were made of glass to have a view of mesa-colored sand and violet mountains, but the houses were so close to each other that the builders had to fence them in, and the result was like living in a room whose walls are mirrors. In fact, my house had a

twenty-foot mirror which faced the wall of plate-glass window. No matter where I stood in the living room, I could never miss the sight of my rented garden with its desert flowers and the lone yucca tree.

During the dry season which lasted for nine months of the year, the resort was parched by the sun. Every twilight the spray from a thousand sprinklers washed dust and sand from the gray foliage; morning and afternoon the sun scorched the sap from the plants and the desert circled the resort, its cacti standing on the horizon while croppings of dusty rock gathered like scavengers in the distance. The blue sky burned on the pale desert. It would come on me at times that Desert D'Or was a place where no trees bear leaves. The palms and the yuccas lifted a foliage of tufts and fans and fronds and shoots, but never leaves, and on some of the roads where tall palms lined the way, their dead fronds hung from the trunk like an ostrich's muff.

During the off-season, most of the activity took place in the bars. The bars were a village in the town, or at least a kind of main street in the absence of any other, yet they were as different from the warm front of Desert D'Or as the inside of one's body is separate from the surface of one's skin. Like so many other places in Southern California, the bars, cocktail lounges, and night clubs were made to look like a jungle, an underwater grotto, or the lounge of a modern movie theater. The Cerulean Room, to take an example, had an irregular space of rose-orange walls and booths of yellow leatherette under the influence of a dark blue ceiling. Above the serving bar with its bank of bottles, its pyramids of citrus fruit, a smoky-yellow false ceiling reflected into the mirror behind the bar and colored the etching of a half-nude girl which had been cut into the glass. Drinking in that atmosphere, I never knew whether it was night or day, and I think that kind of uncertainty got into everybody's conversation. Men lacquered with liquor talked to other men who were sober, stories were started and never finished. On a typical afternoon in the air-cooled midnight of the bar, you could see a fat old man in a Palm Beach suit talking to a young girl with orange lipstick and the deep sun tan of Desert D'Or, the girl more interested in the old gent than the gentleman in her. Promoters and tourists, middle-aged women with new-colored hair, and high school kids who had competed in running hot-rods across the desert, were jammed together. The talk was made up of horses, stories

of parties the night before, and systems for roulette. Running along the heavy beat of a third-rate promoter trying to raise money, there would come the solo shriek of one hysterical blond or another, who seemed to be laughing in that tune which goes, "I'm dumb, I'm dumb, but you're a scream."

In such a way, afternoon was always passing into night, and drunken nights into the dawn of a desert morning. One seemed to leave the theatrical darkness of afternoon for the illumination of night, and the sun of Desert D'Or became like the stranger who the drunk imagines to be following him. So I spent my first few weeks doing little more than pick up the bar checks of all those small sharp prospectors for pleasure from the capital, and in the capsule biography by which most of the people knew one another, I was understood to be an Air Force pilot whose family was wealthy and lived in the East, and I even added the detail that I had a broken marriage and drank to get over it. As a story it was reasonable enough to pass, and I sometimes believed what I said and tried to take the cure in the very real sun of Desert D'Or with its cactus, its mountain, and the bright green foliage of its love and its money.

Chapter Two

TO MOST OF THE BAR-FLIES in Desert D'Or I must have been passing impressive. I had my First Lieutenant's bars and my wings, I had combat decorations from that Asiatic war which has gone its intermittent way. I even looked the part. I had blond hair and blue eyes and I was six-feet one. I was good-looking and I knew it; I had studied the mirror long enough. Yet I never believed I was convincing. When I would put on my uniform, I would feel like an unemployed actor who tries to interest a casting director by dressing for the role.

Of course, everybody sees himself through his own eyes, and I can

Part Two

Chapter Seven

WITH THE BEGINNING of the season, there was some rain, not a great deal, but enough to put the desert flowers into bloom. Which brought the crowd from the capital. The movie people filled the hotels, and the season residents opened their homes. Movie stars were on the street, and gamblers, criminals with social cartel, models, entertainers, athletes, airplane manufacturers, even an artist or two. They came in all kinds of cars: in Cadillac limousines, in ruby convertibles and gold-yellow convertibles, in little foreign cars and big foreign cars. Then with the start of the season on me, I came to like the wall around my house which was always safe in the privacy it gave, and I would think at times how confusing the town must be to the day tourist who could drive through street after street and know no more of the resort than the corridors of an office building would tell about the rooms.

Eitel did not take to this invasion. He had come to prefer being alone, and was rarely to be seen at the hotel. One day when I stopped by his house, the phone rang in Eitel's bedroom. From the den I could hear him talking. He was being invited to visit somebody who had just arrived at the Yacht Club, and after he hung up, I could feel his excitement. "How would you like to meet a pirate?" he said with a laugh.

"Who is it?"

"The producer, Collie Munshin."

"Why do you call him a pirate?" I asked.

"Just wait until you meet him."

But Eitel could not keep himself from saying more. I think he was irritated at how much pleasure the invitation gave him.

Munshin was the son-in-law of Herman Teppis, Eitel explained, and Teppis was the head of Supreme Pictures. Munchin had married Teppis' daughter, and it had helped to make him one of the most important producers in the capital. "Not that he wouldn't have made it anyway," Eitel said. "Nothing could stop Collie." He had been, I learned, a little bit of many things, a salesman, a newspaperman, a radio announcer for a small station, a press-relations consultant, an actor's agent, an assistant producer, and finally a producer. "Once upon a time," Eitel went on, "he was practically an office boy for me. I know the key to Collie. He's shameless. You can't stop a man who's never been embarrassed by himself."

Eitel began to change his shirt. By the way he picked his tie, I knew he did not feel nearly as casual as he was hoping to feel. "Wonder why he wants to see me?" he said aloud. "I suppose he wants to steal an idea."

"Why bother?" I asked. "Nothing is cheaper than ideas."

"It's his technique. Collie gets a feeling about a story. Not anything you can really name. Some cloud of an idea. Then he invites a writer who's out of work to come to lunch. He listens to the writer's suggestions, and they talk the thing up. The next day he invites another man to lunch. By the time he's talked to half a dozen writers he has a story and then he uses one of the peons he keeps locked in a hole to write the thing. When Collie is done, he can sell the story to the studio as his own creation. Oh, he's clever, he's tenacious, he's scheming . . ." Eitel ran out of words.

"What's to keep him from running the studio?" I asked.

"Nothing," said Eitel, putting on a jacket, "he'll run the world someday." Then Eitel smiled. "Only first he has to learn how to handle me. Sometimes I can set him back."

As he closed the door behind us, Eitel added, "There's another thing which might hold him up. He's having woman trouble."

"Does he run around with so many?"

Eitel looked at me as if I had a lot to learn about the psychology of prominent men in the capital. "Why, no," he said, "Collie has too many decisions to juggle, and that slows a man up, don't you know?"

Besides, it's not so easy to keep a harem when your wife is Herman Teppis' daughter. You don't even keep a fancy girl. Just a child in a cubbyhole and she's caused him trouble enough with H.T. It's some poor dancer. She's been his girl for several years. I've never met her, but Collie will be the first to tell you the trouble she gives him. It's a conventional relationship. She wants him to divorce his wife and marry her, and Collie lets her believe that he will. Poor boy, he can't bear to let go of anything." Eitel chuckled. "Of course, the girl friend makes him pay. When Collie's not around, his little kitten will go for a romp. A couple of actors who've worked for me have been with her. They tell me she's extraordinary in bed."

"Isn't that rough on him?"

"I don't know," Eitel said, "there are parts and parts to Collie. He enjoys being a martyr."

"Sounds like a sad character to me."

"Oh, everybody's sad if you want to look at them that way. Collie's not so bad off. Just remember there's nobody like him in the whole world."

We came to Munchin's bungalow, and Eitel tapped the knocker on the pink-colored door. After a wait I could hear somebody running toward us, and then it flew open, and I had no more than the sight of the back of a fat man in a dressing gown who went bounding away to the phone, the gown flapping against his calves while he called over his shoulder, "Come in. Be with you in a minute, fellows." He was talking in a high-pitched easy voice to somebody in New York, holding the receiver in his left hand while with his right he was neatly mixing drinks for us, not only carrying on his business conversation but opening a big smile across his face at the introduction to me. A little under medium height, with short turned-up features, he looked like a clown, for he had a large round head on a round body and almost no neck at all.

The drinks made, he passed them over with a wink, and his right hand free again, he began to tickle his thin hair, discovering a bald spot on his head and then patting it into hiding again, only to leave his head for his belly which he prodded gingerly as if to find out whether it concealed an ache. He certainly had a lot of energy; I had the idea it would be rare to see him doing one thing at a time.

Eitel sat down with a bored look and smiled at the producer's calisthenics. When the call was done, Munshin bounced to his feet and advanced on Eitel with an outstretched palm, a grin on his face. "*Charley!*" he said, as if Eitel had just come into the room and he was surprised to see him. "You look great. How have you been?" Munshin asked, his free hand covering their handclasp. "I've been hearing great things about you."

"Stop it, Collie," Eitel laughed, "there's nothing you can steal from me."

"Steal? Lover, I just want to steal your company." He clamped a bear-hug on Eitel's neck. "You look great," he repeated. "I've been hearing wonderful things about your script. I want to read it when it's done."

"What for?" Eitel asked.

"I want to buy it." He said this as if nothing was in the way of buying anything from Eitel.

"The only way I'll let you buy it is blind."

"I'll buy it blind. If it's from you, Charley, I'll buy it blind."

"You wouldn't buy Shakespeare blind."

"You think I'm kidding," Munshin said in a sad voice.

"Stop it, Collie," Eitel said again.

As he talked, Munshin kept on touching Eitel, pinching his elbow, patting his shoulder, jabbing his ribs. "Charley, don't show your script to anybody. Just work on it. Don't worry about your situation."

"Get your greedy little hands off me. You know I'm going to make the picture by myself."

"That's your style, Charley," Munshin said with a profound nod. "That's the way you always should work."

He told us a joke, passed a bit of gossip, and kept his hands on Eitel's body in a set of movements which called up the picture of a fat house detective searching a drunk. Then Eitel walked away from him, and we all sat down and looked at each other. After a short silence, Munshin announced, "I've thought of a great movie to make."

"What is it?" I asked, for Eitel only made a face. The producer gave the name of a famous French novel. "That author knows everything about sex," Munshin said. "I'll never be able to think I'm in love again."

"Why don't you do the life of the Marquis de Sade?" Eitel drawled.

"You think I wouldn't if I could find a gimmick?"

"Collie," Eitel said, "sit down and tell me the story you really have."

"I don't have a thing. I'm open to suggestion. I'm tired of making the same old stuff. Every man has an artistic desire in this business."

"He's absolutely unscrupulous," Eitel said with pride. Collie grinned. He cocked his head to the side with the cunning look of a dog who is being scolded.

"You're a born exaggerator," Munshin said.

"You can't stop Collie."

"I love you."

Munshin poured another drink for us. Like a baby, his upper lip was covered with perspiration. "Well, how *are* things?" he said.

"Just fine, Collie. How are things with you?" Eitel asked in a flat voice. I knew him well enough to know he was very much on guard.

"Charley, my personal life is in bad shape."

"Your wife?"

Munshin stared into space, his hard small eyes the only sign of bone beneath his fat. "Well, things are always the same between her and me."

"What is it then, Collie?"

"I've decided to give the brush to my girl friend."

Eitel began to laugh. "It's about time."

"Now, don't laugh, Charley. This is important to me."

I was surprised at the way Munshin talked so frankly. He hadn't known me fifteen minutes, and yet he was as ready to talk as if he were alone with Eitel. I was still to learn that Munshin, like many people from the capital, could talk openly about his personal life while remaining a dream of espionage in his business operations.

"You're not really giving her up?" Eitel said lightly. "What's the matter, has Teppis laid down the law?"

"Charley!" Munshin said, "this is a personal tragedy for me."

"I suppose you're in love with the girl."

"No, now I wouldn't say that. It's hard to explain."

"Oh, I'm sure of that, Collie."

"I'm very worried about her future," Munshin said, his fingers prodding his belly again.

"From what I've heard about her, she'll get along."

"What did you hear?" Munshin asked.

"Just that while she's known you, she's had her extracurricular activities."

Munshin's round face became tolerant and sad. "We live in a community of scandal," he said.

"Spare me, Collie," Eitel murmured.

Munshin was on his feet. "You don't understand this girl," he said in a booming voice. "I was left behind by the sudden transition. 'She's a child. She's a beautiful, warm, simple child.'"

"And you're a beautiful, warm, simple father."

"I've defended you, Charley," Munshin said. "I've defended you against stories which even you wouldn't want to hear about yourself. But I'm beginning to think you're nothing but rottenness and corruption."

"Honest corruption. I don't play the saint."

"I'm not claiming I'm a saint," Munshin bellowed again. "But I have feelings." He turned in my direction. "What do you see when you look at a fellow like myself?" he asked. "You see a fat man who likes to play the clown. Does that mean I have no human sentiments?"

He was far from a clown at the moment. His mild high-pitched voice had swollen in volume and dropped deeper in tone. Standing over us, he gave me the feeling that he was a man of some physical power. "All right, Charley," he said, "I know what you think of me, but I'll tell you something. I may be a businessman, and you may be an artist, and I've great respect for your talent, great respect, but you're a cold man, and I have emotions, and that's why you can't understand me."

Through this tirade, Eitel had been drawing on his cigarette. Nonchalantly, he put it out. "Why did you invite me over, Collie?"

"For friendship. Can't you understand that? I wanted to hear your troubles, and I wanted to tell you mine."

Eitel leaned forward, his broad body hunched on itself. "I have no troubles," he said with a smile. "Let me hear yours."

Munshin relaxed. "There are pluses as well as minuses to this affair. It's easy to sneer at the girl," he said. "I've sneered at her myself. When I first set her up, I thought, 'Just another night-club dancer. A hot Italian babe with that hot Latin blood.' Well, it's a story, Charley. She may not be so brilliant, and she's obviously from a poor background." He looked at me. "I've always been full of prejudices about women," Munshin said humbly. "You know, I've wanted girls with some class and distinction to them, and I'll admit it, it's what I still hold against Elena. She doesn't match up to the people I know. But that doesn't keep her from being very human."

"Still, you're giving her the brush," Eitel said. "You're giving the brush to a very human girl."

"There's no future for us. I admit it, you see, I admit my faults. I'm a social coward like everybody else in the industry."

"So like all cowards you got tired of turning down her marriage proposals."

"Elena's not a schemer," Munshin said firmly. "You want to know something? Just a couple of days ago I tried to give her a thousand dollars. She wouldn't take it. Not once did she ever ask me to marry her. She's not the kind who threatens. It's just that I can't stand the thought she has no future with me."

"Herman Teppis can't stand the thought either."

Munshin allowed this to pass. "Let me tell you about her. She's a girl who's composed of hurts and emotion and dirt and shining love," he said in the round categorical style of a criminal lawyer who wishes to attract all the elements in a jury. "I had my analyst send her to a friend of his, but it didn't come off. She didn't have enough ego to work on. That's how serious the problem is." Munshin held out a heavy palm as if to draw our attention. "Take the way I met her. She was doing a fill-in number at a benefit I ran. I saw her in the wings, dressed up, ready to go on. A real Carmen-type. Only, a Carmen shuddering with fright," said Munshin looking at us. "She was practically clawing the hand off her partner. 'There's a human being in torment,' I said to myself, 'a girl who's as wild and sensitive as an animal.' Yet when she got up on the stage, she was all right. A good flamenco dancer. In and out, but talent. Afterward, we started talking,

and she told me she couldn't even eat a piece of bread on a day she was working. I told her I thought I could help her with some of her problems and she was grateful as a puppy. That's how we started." Munshin's voice became heavy with emotion. "You, Eitel, you'd call that scheming, I suppose. I call it sensitivity and heartbreak and all kinds of hurts. She's a girl who's all hurts."

As Munshin kept on talking, I had the idea he was describing her the way he might line up a heroine in a story conference, the story conference more interesting than the film which would come from it.

"You take the business of being Italian," Munshin lectured us. "I can't tell you the things I've learned, the human subtleties, and I'm a good liberal. For instance, if she was served by a Negro waiter, she always had the idea that he was being a little intimate with her. I talked to her about such problems. I explained how wrong it is to have prejudice against a Negro, and she understood."

"Like that," Eitel said, snapping his fingers.

"You stop it, Charley," Munshin said, bobbing in his seat. "You understand what I mean. She was ashamed of her prejudice. Elena is a person who hates everything that is small in herself. She's consumed by the passion to become a bigger person than she is, *consumed*, do you understand?" and he shook his fist.

"Collie, I really think you're upset."

"Take her promiscuity," Munshin went on, as if he had not heard. "She's the sort of girl who would love a husband and kids, a decent healthy mature relationship. You think it didn't bother me, her seeing other men? But I knew it was my fault. I was to blame and I'll admit it freely. What could I offer her?"

"What could the others offer her?" Eitel interrupted.

"Fine. Fine. Just fine coming from you. I'll tell you, Charley, I don't believe in double standards. A woman's got just as much right as a man to her freedom."

"Why don't we start a club?" Eitel jeered.

"I've gone to bat for you, Eitel. I pleaded with H. T. not to suspend you after *Clouds Ahoy*. Are you so ungrateful that I have to remind you how many times I helped you make pictures you wanted to make?"

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"And then you cut them to ribbons."

"We've had our disagreements, Charley, but I've always considered you a friend. I don't care what transpires between us today, it won't affect my attitude toward you."

Eitel smiled.

"I'm curious." Munshin put his hands on his knees. "What do you think of Elena the way I've described her?"

"I think she's better than you deserve."

"I'm glad you say that, Charley. It means I've been able to convey her quality." Munshin paused, and loosened the cord of his dressing gown. "You see, about an hour ago I told Elena we couldn't go on."

"An hour ago!"

Munshin nodded.

"You mean she's here?" Eitel asked. "Here in town?"

"Yes."

"You brought her out here to give her the brush?"

Munshin started to pace the floor. "I didn't plan it. A lot of times I bring her along on my trips."

"And let her stay in a separate hotel?"

"Well, I've explained the situation."

"When is your wife due?"

"She'll be here tomorrow." Munshin blew his nose. "I had no idea it would happen like this. For months I knew I couldn't go on with Elena, but I didn't expect it for today."

Eitel shook his head. "What do you want me to do? Hold her hand?"

"No, I mean . . ." Munshin looked miserable. "Charley, she doesn't know a soul in this place."

"Then let her go back to the city."

"I can't stand the thought of her being alone. There's no telling what she'll do. Charley, I'm going out of my mind." Munshin stared at his handkerchief which he kept wadded in his hand. "Elena was the one who said we should break up. I know what it means to her. She'll put the blame on herself. She'll feel she wasn't good enough for me."

"It's the truth, isn't it?" Eitel said. "That's how you feel."

"All right, I'm the rotten one. I'm no good." Munshin came to a

stop in front of Eitel. "Charley, I remember you saying, it's your exact words. You said that when you were a kid you always wondered how to get a woman, and now you wonder how to get rid of one."

"I was bragging."

"Can't you sympathize?"

"With you?"

"Could you pay her a visit?"

"I don't know her," Eitel said.

"You could be introduced as a friend of mine."

Eitel sat up. "Tell me, Collie," he said, "is that why you loaned me the money two weeks ago?"

"What money?" said Munshin.

"You don't have to worry about Sergius," Eitel said, and he began to laugh. "I'm ashamed of you. Two thousand dollars is a lot of money for Carlyle Munshin to pay to have a broken-down director take a girl off his hands."

"Charley, you're a corrupt man," Munshin said loudly. "I loaned you that money because I consider you my friend, and I oughtn't to have to tell you that you could be more discreet. If word ever got around, I'd be in trouble up to here." The producer held a finger to his throat. "It's Elena I'm thinking about now. Let this boy be the witness. If anything happens to her, part of it will be your fault."

"There's no limit to you, Collie," Eitel started to say, but Munshin interrupted. "Charley, I'm not kidding, that girl should not be left alone. Do I say I'm in the right? What do you want, my blood? Offer a solution at least."

"Turn her over to Marion Faye."

"You're a stone," Munshin said. "A human being is in pain, and you say things like that."

"I'll see her," I blurted suddenly.

"You're a beautiful kid," Munshin said levelly, "but this is not the job for you."

"Keep out of this," Eitel snapped at me.

"Even the kid here will go," Munshin said. "Charley, tell me, is all the heart cut out of you? Isn't there even a little bit left? Or are you getting too old to handle a real woman?"

Eitel lay back in his chair and stared at the ceiling, his legs spread

before him. "Okay, Collie," he said slowly, "okay. One loan deserves another. I'll get drunk with your girl."

"You're a jewel, Charley," Munshin said huskily.

"What if you-know-what happens?" Eitel drawled.

"Are you a sadist?" Munshin said. "I don't even think of things like that."

"Then what do you think of?"

"You'll like Elena and she'll like you. It'll make her feel good to know that a fellow with your reputation and your presence admires her."

"Oh, God," Eitel said.

The phone was ringing.

Munshin tried to say something more as if he were afraid Eitel might change his mind, but the noise of the telephone was too distracting. Obeying the irregular rhythm of the switchboard operator, it would stop, it would be silent, and then it would ring again.

"Answer it," Eitel said irritably.

Munshin pinched the receiver against his jaw. He was preparing to make another drink, but the sounds he heard through the earpiece stopped everything. We listened to a woman who was crying and laughing, and her fright quivered through the room. There was so much terror in the voice and so much pain that I stared at the floor in shock. One cry sounded, so loud in its loneliness I couldn't bear it.

"Where are you, Elena?" Munshin said sharply into the mouthpiece.

Some climax passed. I could hear the sound of quiet sobbing. "I'll be right over," Munshin said. "Now, you stay there. You stay there, do you understand, Elena?" He had no sooner hung up the phone than he was drawing on a pair of trousers, fastening the buttons to a shirt.

Eitel was pale. "Collie," he said with an effort, "do you want me to come along?"

"She's in her hotel room," Munshin said from the door. "I'll call you later."

Eitel nodded and sat back. We were silent once Munshin was gone. After a few minutes, Eitel got up and mixed a drink. "What a horrible thing," he muttered.

"How does a man," I asked, "stay with a woman who is so . . . It's messy."

Eitel looked up. "A little compassion, Sergius," he said. "Do you think we choose our mates?" And, moodily, he sipped on his drink. "I wonder if I'll ever know the answer to that one?" he said almost to himself.

Time passed, and we kept on drinking Carlyle Munshin's liquor. Slowly, the afternoon went by. It seemed pointless to remain there, just as pointless to move on. Outside, there would only be the desert sun. "I'm depressed," Eitel said with a broad grin after half a dozen drinks. I had the feeling his face was numb; slowly, with pleasure, he was patting the bald spot on his head. "Wonder how Collie is making out?" Eitel said after another pause.

As if to answer, there was a knock on the door. I went to open it, and an elderly man shouldered me aside and walked into the living room. "Where's Carlyle?" he asked of nobody in particular, and left me to follow behind him.

Eitel stood up. "Well, Mr. Teppis," he said.

Teppis gave him a sour look. He was a tall heavy man with silver hair and a red complexion, but even with his white summer suit and hand-painted tie he was far from attractive. Underneath the sun tan, his features were poor; his eyes were small and pouched, his nose was flat, and his chin ran into the bulge of his neck. He had a close resemblance to a bullfrog. When he spoke, it was in a thin hoarse voice. "All right," he said, "what are you doing here?"

"Do you know," Eitel said, "that's a good question to ask."

"Collie's up to something," Teppis announced. "I don't know why he saw you. I wouldn't even want to breathe the air a subversive breathes. Do you know what you cost me on *Clouds Ahoy*?"

"You forget the money I made for you . . . Herman."

"Hah," said Teppis, "now he calls me by my first name. They leave me and they go up in the world. Eitel, I warned Lulu against you. Marry a fine young American actress, a girl who's too good for you, and you just drag her name through the muck and the dirt and the filth. If anybody saw me talking to you, I'd be ashamed."

"You should be," Eitel said. "Lulu was a fine American girl, and

you let me turn her into a common whore." His voice was cool, but I could sense it was not easy for him to talk to Teppis.

"You have a dirty mouth," Herman Teppis said, "and nothing else."

"Don't speak to me this way. I no longer work for you."

Teppis rocked forward and back on the balls of his feet as if to build up momentum. "I'm ashamed to have made money from your movies. Five years ago I called you into my office and I warned you. 'Eitel,' I said, 'anybody that tries to throw a foul against this country ends up in the pigpen.' That's what I said, but did you listen?" He waved a finger. "You know what they're talking about at the studio? They say you're going to make a comeback. Some comeback. You couldn't do a day's work without the help of the studio. I let people know that."

"Come on, Sergius, let's go," Eitel said.

"Wait, you!" Teppis said to me. "What's your name?"

I told him. I gave it with an Irish twist.

"What kind of name is that for a clean-cut youngster like you? You should change it. John Yard. That's the kind of name you should have." He looked me over as if he were buying a bolt of cloth. "Who are you?" said Teppis, "what do you do? I hope you're not a bum."

If he wanted to irritate me, he was successful. "I used to be in the Air Force," I said to him.

There was a gleam in his eye. "A flier?"

Standing in the doorway, Eitel decided to have his own fun. "Do you mean you never heard of this boy, H.T.?"

Teppis was cautious. "I can't keep up with everything," he said.

"Sergius is a hero," Eitel said creatively. "He shot down four planes in a day."

I had no chance to get into this. Teppis smiled as if he had been told something very valuable. "Your mother and father must be extremely proud of you," he said.

"I wouldn't know. I was brought up in an orphanage." My voice was probably unsteady because I could see by Eitel's change of expression that he knew I was telling the truth. I was sick at giving myself away so easily. But it is always like that. You hold a secret for

years, and then spill it like a cup of coffee. Or maybe Teppis made me spill it.

"An orphan," he said. "I'm staggered. Do you know you're a remarkable young man?" He smiled genially and looked at Eitel. "Charley, you come back here," he said in his hoarse voice. "What are you flying off the handle for? You've heard me talk like this before."

"You're a rude man, Herman," Eitel said from the doorway.

"Rude?" Teppis put a fatherly hand on my shoulder. "Why, I wouldn't even be rude to my doorman." He laughed and then began to cough. "Eitel," he said, "what's happened to Carlyle? Where'd he go?"

"He didn't tell me."

"I don't understand anybody any more. You're a young man, Johnny," he said, pointing to me as if I were inanimate, "you tell me, what is everything all about?" But long before I could answer that question, he started talking again. "In my day a man got married, and he could be fortunate in his selection, or he could have bad luck, but he was married. I was a husband for thirty-two years, may my wife rest in peace, I have her picture on my desk. Can *you* say that, Eitel? What do you have on your desk? Pinup pictures. I don't know people who feel respect for society any more. I tell Carlyle. What happens? He wallows. That's the kind of man my daughter wanted to marry. A fool who sneaks around with a chippie dancer."

"We all have our peculiarities, Herman," Eitel said.

This made Teppis angry. "Eitel," he shouted, "I don't like you, and you don't like me, but I make an effort to get along with everybody," and then to quiet himself down, he made a point of looking me over very carefully. "What do you do?" he asked again as if he had not heard my answer. "Are you an actor?"

"No."

"I knew it. None of the good-looking clean-cut ones are actors any more. Just the ugly ones. Faces like bugs." He cleared his throat with a barking sound. "Look, Johnny," he went on, "I like you, I'll do you a good turn. There's a little party tomorrow night. I'm giving it for our people out here. You're invited."

The moment he gave this invitation, I knew I wanted to go to his

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party. Everybody in Desert D'Or had been talking about it for the last few days, and this was the first big party at the resort which I had been invited to. But I was angry at myself because I was ready to say yes, and in that second I almost forgot Eitel. So I told myself that I was going to play it through, and if Teppis wanted to invite me, and I didn't know why, I was going to get him to invite Eitel.

"I don't know if I want to go alone," I said to him, and I was satisfied that my voice was even.

"Bring a girl," Teppis offered. "You got a sweetheart?"

"It's not easy to find the right girl," I said. "I lost too much time flying airplanes."

My instinct about Herman Teppis seemed to be working. He nodded his head wisely. "I see the connection," he said.

"I was thinking Charley Eitel could help me find a girl," I added.

For a second I thought I had lost it and Teppis was going to fly into a rage. He glared at both of us. "Who invited Eitel?" he said furiously.

"You didn't invite him?" I said. "I thought maybe you did."

With what an effort, Teppis smiled benevolently. "Johnny, you're a very loyal friend. You got spunk." In practically the same breath he said to Eitel, "Tell me, cross your heart, Charley, are you a Red?"

Eitel didn't rush to answer. "You know everything, Herman," he murmured at last. "Why ask questions?"

"I know!" Teppis shouted. "I know all about you. I'll never understand why you made such a spectacle of yourself." He threw up his arms. "All right, all right, I know you're clean deep-down. Come to my party." Teppis shook his head. "Only, do me a favor, Charley. Don't say I invited you. Say it was Mac Barrantine."

"This is one hell of an invitation," Eitel answered.

"You think so, well don't look a gift horse, you know what I mean? One of these days go clear yourself with the American government, and then maybe I'll work with you. I got no objection to making money with people I don't like. It's my motto." He took my hand and shook it firmly. "Agree with me, Johnny? That's the ticket. I'll see both you boys tomorrow night."

On the drive back to Eitel's house I was in a good mood. Teppis had been just right for me. I was even overexcited, I kept talking to Eitel about how it felt the time I took my first solo. Then I began to realize

that the more I talked the more depressed I made him feel, and so looking for any kind of question to change the subject I said, "What do you say about our invitation? Maybe there's going to be just a little look on people's faces when you turn up." I started to laugh again.

Eitel shook his head. "They'll probably say I've been having private talks with the Committee, or else why would Teppis have me there?" Then he grinned at the frustration of it. "Man," he said, mimicking me, "don't you just have to be good to win?" But there was more than enough to think about in this thought, and neither of us said another word until we turned into his garage. Then Eitel stopped the car with a jerk. "Sergius, I'm not going to that party," he said.

"Well, if you won't change your mind . . ." I wanted to go to the party, I was ready for it, I thought, but it was going to be harder without Eitel. I wouldn't know anybody there.

"You did well, today," he said. "You go. You'll enjoy it. But I can't go. I've been a bus boy to Teppis for too many years." We went inside, and Eitel dropped into an armchair and pressed his hands to his forehead. The script was on the end table next to him. He picked it up, rustled the pages, and dropped it to the floor. "Don't tell anybody, Sergius," he said, "but this script stinks."

"Are you sure?"

"I don't know. I can't get out of myself long enough to look at it." He sighed. "If I ever bring it off, remind me, will you, of this conversation? You see, I've been trying to remember if I was as depressed in the old days when the work would come out well."

"I'll remind you," I said.

A short while later, Munshin phoned Eitel. Elena was all right, he told him. She was sleeping. Tonight, he would take care of her. But for tomorrow he begged Eitel to show her a good time.

Eitel said he would. When the call was finished, his eyes were dancing. "Do you know," he said, "I can hardly accuse myself of running after Teppis if I take Collie's girl along."

"But what about the girl?"

"It could be the best way to get over Mr. Munshin. She'll see that a stranger will do more for her in a night than he did in three years."

"What are you up to?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm going to take her to the party," Eitel said.

Chapter Eight

THE LAGUNA ROOM at the Yacht Club which Herman Teppis had rented for his party was not a room at all. Painted in the lemon-yellow of the Yacht Club, it was open to the sky, and like the café, an amoebic pool strayed between the tables, rounded a portion of the dance floor, and ended behind the bar, a play of colored lights changing the water into a lake of tomato aspic, lime jello, pale consommé, and midnight ink. On an island not twenty feet long, in the middle of the pool, the bandstand was set up, and the musicians played their dance numbers free of any passing drunk who might want to take a turn on the drums.

Since the party was given by Herman Teppis, the management of the Yacht Club had added some special old-fashioned effects. A big searchlight threw its column into the air, placed at such an angle as not to burn into the eyes of the guests, and a collection of spotlights and flood lamps was arranged to make it look like a party on a movie set, even to the expense of a tremendous papier-mache camera on a wooden boom, directed by a bellhop wearing the outfit of a silent-film cameraman with the peak of his cap turned backward and a pair of knickers which reached his knees. All through the evening the camera was rotated on its boom, being lowered almost into the water or raised so high it threw a long shadow across the colors of the Laguna Room.

I had trouble getting in. Eitel had left earlier in the evening to meet Elena and had still not returned by eleven, so I decided to go alone, and I put on my Air Corps uniform with its ribbons. At the entrance to the Laguna Room, which was garnished with a gangplank, a man dressed like a purser stood checking the invitations. There was no record of my name on the guest list.

I said, "Maybe I'm down there as John Yard."

There was no John Yard on the purser's scratchboard.

"How about Charles Eitel?" I asked.

"Mr. Eitel is listed, but you would have to come in with him."

Yet it was the purser who discovered my name. In a last-minute addition, Teppis had recorded me as "Shamus Something-or-other," and so as Shamus Something-or-other, I got into his party.

Near the purser's stand, seated on two couches which faced each other, were half a dozen women. They were all dressed expensively, and their make-up to make up for such faults as thin mouths, small eyes, and mouse-colored hair, had curved their lips, slimmed their cheeks, and given golden or chestnut tints to their coiffures. Like warriors behind their painted shields, they sat stiffly, three and three, staring at one another, talking with apathy. I bobbed my head at them, not knowing whether to introduce myself or to move on, and one of them looked up, and in a voice which was harsh, asked, "You under contract at Magnum?"

"No," I said.

"Oh, I thought you were somebody else," she said and looked away again.

They were talking about their children and I guessed, as Eitel later confirmed, that they were the wives of important men and men who wanted to be important, the husbands off in chase of one another through the Laguna Room while the women were left behind.

"What do you mean, California is no good?" one of them said fiercely. "It's wonderful for children."

When a man went by, they tried to pay no notice. I realized that in walking past with a clumsy smile, showing how I didn't know if I was supposed to talk to them or not, I had done the dirty service of reflecting their situation. A few other men came in after me, and I saw that they either walked by without a look, or stopped for a brief but wild gallantry which went something like this:

"Carolyn!" the man would say, as if he could not believe he saw the woman here and was simply overcome.

"Mickey!" one of the six women would say.

"My favorite girl," the man would say, holding her hand.

"The only real man I know," the deserted wife would say. Mickey would smile. He would shake his head, he would hold her hand. "If I

didn't know you were kidding, I could give you a tumble," he would say.

"Don't be too sure I'm kidding," the wife would say.

Mickey would straighten up, he would release her hand. There would be a silence until Mickey murmured, "What a woman." Then, in the businesslike tone which ends a conversation, he would say, "How are the kids, Carolyn?"

"They're fine."

"That's great. That's great." He would start to move away, and give a smile to all the women. "We have to have a long talk, you and me," Mickey would say.

"You know where to find me."

"Great kidder, Carolyn," Mickey would announce to nobody in particular, and disappear into the party.

All through the Laguna Room, wherever there was a couch, three wives were sitting in much that way. Since a lot of the men had come without women, the result was that men got together with men, standing near the pool, off the dance floor, at the café tables or in a crowd near the bar. I picked up a drink and wandered through the party looking for a girl to talk to. But all the attractive girls were surrounded, though by fewer men than squeezed up to listen to a film director or a studio executive, and besides I did not know how to get into the conversations. They were all so private. I had been thinking that my looks and my uniform might not do me any harm, but most of the girls seemed to like the conversation of fat middle-aged men and bony middle-aged men, the prize going to a German movie director with a big paunch who had his arms around the waists of two starlets. Actually I wasn't really that eager. Being stone sober, the fact was that it was easier to drift from one circle of men to another.

In a cove of the bar formed by two tables and the tip of one of the pool's tentacles, I found Jennings James telling a joke to several feature actors of no particular celebrity. Jay-Jay rambled on, his eyes blurred behind his silver-rimmed glasses. When he was done, other jokes were told, each more stray than the one which went before. I quit them after a while, and Jay-Jay caught up to me.

"What a stinking party this is," he said. "I'm supposed to work

tonight, show the photographers a good time." He coughed with stomach misery. "I left all those photographers over at the canopy table. You know it's the truth about photographers, they'd rather eat than drink." Jay-Jay had an arm on my shoulder, and I realized he was using me as an escort to reach the men's room. "You know the line of poetry, 'Me-thought I saw the grave where Laura lay'?" he started to say. But whatever it was he wanted to add was lost, and he stood looking at me sheepishly. "Well, that's a beautiful line of poetry," he finished, and like a kid who has clung to the back of a streetcar while it climbs the hill, and drops off once the top is reached, Jay-Jay let go my arm and, listing from the change in balance, went careening to the urinal.

I was left to stand around the edge of one group or another. A director finished a story of which I heard no more than the last few lines. "I sat down and I told her that to be a good actress, she must always work for the truth in what she's playing," the man said in a voice not empty of self-love, "and she said, 'What's the truth?' and I said it could be defined as the real relation between human beings. You saw the performance I got out of her." He stopped, the story was over, and the men and women around him nodded wisely. "That's wonderful advice you gave her, Mr. Sneale," a girl said, and the others murmured in agreement.

"Howard, tell the story about you and Mr. Teppis," one of them begged.

The director chuckled. "Well, this story is on Herman, but I know he wouldn't mind. There are enough stories on me in my dealings with him. H.T.'s got an instinct which is almost infallible. There's a reason why he's such a great movie-maker, such a creative movie-maker."

"That's very true, Howard," the same girl said.

I moved on without listening any more and almost bumped into the subject of the story. In a corner, off on a discussion, were Herman Teppis and two other men who were not too different from Teppis. They had been pointed out to me already as Eric Haislip, head of Magnum, and Mac Barrantine from Liberty Pictures, but I think I would have guessed in any case, for the three men were left alone. If I had drunk my liquor more slowly, I might have felt the social paradox which allowed only these men to be able to talk without the attention

of a crowd, but instead I placed myself at the elbow of the producer named Mac Barrantine. They continued their conversation without paying any attention to me.

"What do you think you'll gross on *The Tigress*?" Eric Haislip was saying.

"Three-and-a-half to four," Herman Teppis said.

"Three-and-a-half to four?" Eric Haislip repeated. "H.T., you're not talking to the New York office. You'll be lucky to get your money out."

Teppis snorted. "I could buy your studio with what we'll make."

Mac Barrantine spoke slowly out of the side of a cigar. "I claim that you just can't tell any more. There was a time when I could say, 'Bring it in at one-and-a-half, and we'll gross a million over.' Today, picture-making is crazy. A filthy bomb I'm ashamed of makes money, a classical musical comedy vehicle like *Sing, Girls, Sing* lays an egg. You figure it out."

"You're wrong," Herman Teppis said, prodding him with a finger. "You know the trouble? People are confused today. So what do they want? They want a picture that confuses them. Wait till they get really confused. Then they'll want a picture that sets them straight."

"Now you're required to show them real things on the screen," Eric Haislip sighed.

"Real things?" Teppis exploded. "We bring real things to them. Realism. But because a fellow in an Italian movie vomits all over the place and they like it in some art theater doesn't even have air-cooling, we should bring them vomit?"

"There's no discipline," Mac Barrantine said. "Even a director, a man with a high-powered tool in his hands. What does he do? He runs amuck like a gangster."

"Charley Eitel cut your throat," Eric Haislip said.

"They all cut my throat," Teppis said passionately. "You know something? My throat don't cut." He glared at them as if remembering times when each of them had tried to treat him to a razor. "Bygones. Let it be bygones," Teppis said. "I get along with everybody."

"There's no discipline," Barrantine repeated. "I got a star, I won't

mention her name. She came to me, she knew that in two months we were starting production on a really big vehicle for her, and you know what she had the gall to say? 'Mr. Barrantine, my husband and I, we're going to have a baby. I'm six weeks along.' 'You're going to have a baby?' I said, 'where in hell's your loyalty? I know you, you're selfish. You can't tell me you want the heartache of bringing up an infant.' 'Mr. Barrantine, what should I do?' she bawled to me. I gave her a look and then I told her. 'I can't take the responsibility for advising you what to do,' I said, 'but you damn well better do something.' "

"She's going to be in the picture, I hear," Eric Haislip said.

"Of course she's going to be in the picture. She's an ambitious girl. But discipline and consideration. Do any of them have that?"

Eric Haislip was looking at me. "Who are you? What do you want here, kid?" he asked suddenly, although he had been aware of me for several minutes.

"I've been invited," I said.

"Did I invite you to sit on my lap?" Mac Barrantine said.

"You'd be the first," I muttered.

To my surprise, Teppis said, "Leave the boy alone. I know this boy. He's a nice young fellow."

Barrantine and Haislip glowered at me, and I scowled back. We all stood nose to nose like four trucks meeting at a dirt crossroad. "The youth, the young people," Teppis announced. "You think you know something? Listen to a young fellow's ideas. He can tell you something. This boy has a contribution."

Barrantine and Haislip did not seem particularly enthusiastic to hear my contribution. Conversation ground along for several minutes, and then they left on the excuse of filling their drinks. "I'll call the maître dee," Teppis offered. They shook their heads. They needed a walk, they announced. When they were gone, Teppis looked in a fine mood. I had the suspicion he had come to my defense in order to insult them. "First-rate fellows," he said to me. "I've known them for years."

"Mr. Teppis," I said irritably, "why did you invite me to your party?"

He laughed and clamped a hand on my shoulder. "You're a clever boy," he said, "you're quick-tongued. I like that." His hoarse thin

voice drew a conspiratorial link between us whether I wanted it or not. "You take the desert," he confided to me, "it's a wonderful place to make a human being feel alive. I hear music in it all the time. A musical. It's full of cowboys and these fellows that live alone, what do you call them, hermits. Cowboys and hermits and pioneers, that's the sort of place it is. Fellows looking for gold. As a young fellow, what do you think, wouldn't you like to see such a movie? I like history," he went on before I could answer. "It would take a talented director to make such a story, a fellow who knows the desert." He poked me in the ribs as though to leave me breathless and therefore honest. "You take Eitel. Is he still hitting the booze?" Teppis said suddenly, his small flat eyes studying my reaction.

"Not much," I said quickly, but my look must have wandered because Teppis squeezed my shoulder again.

"We got to have a long talk, you and me," Teppis said. "I like Charley Eitel. I wish he didn't have such a stain on his character. Politics. Idiotic. What do you think?"

"I think he's going to make the best movie of his life," I said with the hope I could worry Teppis.

"For the art theaters," Teppis stated, and he pointed a finger to his brain. "It won't be from the heart. You're too fresh for your own good," he continued with one of his fast shifts, "who's interested in your ideas? I'll tell you what the story is. Eitel is through."

"I disagree," I said, cheered to realize I was the only one at this party who did not have to be polite to Herman Teppis.

"You disagree? What do you know? You're a baby." But I thought I understood what went on in him, the fear that he might be wrong chewing at the other fear that he might make a fool of himself by considering Eitel again. "Now listen, you," he started to say, but we were interrupted.

"Good evening, daddy," a woman said.

"Lottie," Teppis said moistly, and embraced her. "Why didn't you call me?" he asked. "Ten o'clock this morning and no call from you."

"I had to miss it today," said Lottie Munchin. "I was packing for the trip."

Teppis began to ask her about his grandchildren, turning his back

almost entirely on me. While they spoke I watched Carlyle Munshin's wife with interest. She was one of those women who are middle-aged too soon, her skin burned into the colors of false health. Thin, nervous, her face was screwed tight, and in those moments when she relaxed, the lines around her forehead and mouth were exaggerated, for the sun had not touched them. Pale haggard eyes looked out from sun-reddened lids. She was wearing an expensive dress but had only succeeded in making it look dowdy. The bones of her chest stood out, and a sort of ruffle fluttered on her freckled skin with a parched rustling movement like a spinster's parlor curtains. "I was delayed getting here," she said to her father in so pinched a voice I had the impression her throat was tight. "You see, Doxy was littering today. You know Doxy?"

"It's one of the mutts?" Teppis asked uncomfortably.

"She took the state-wide blue ribbon for her class," Lottie Munshin said. "Don't you remember?"

"Well, that's good." Teppis coughed. "Now, why don't you leave those dogs out of your mind for a couple of weeks, and you take a good vacation. You relax. You have a good time with Collie."

"I can't leave them for two weeks," she said with something like panic. "Salty litters in the next ten days, and we have to start training Blitzzen and Nod for the trials."

"Well, that's fine," Teppis said vaguely. "Now, there's a fellow I got to see, so I'll leave you in the company of this young man. You'll enjoy talking to him. And Lottie, you remember," he said, "there's more important things than those dogs."

I watched him walk away, nodding his head to the people who swarmed to greet him, carrying them one at a time like parasite fish. One couple even moved off the dance floor and came hurrying toward him.

"Do you like dogs?" Lottie Munshin asked me. She gave a short rough laugh for punctuation, and looked at me with her head cocked to one side.

I made the mistake of saying, "You breed them, don't you?"

She replied; she replied at length; she insisted on going into details which led into other details, she was a fanatic, and I stood listening to

her, trying to find the little girl who had grown into this woman. "Collie and I have the best ranch within the county limits of the capital," she said in that pinched voice, "although of course keeping it up devolves upon me. It's quite a concern, I can tell you. I'm up at six every morning."

"You keep an early schedule," I offered.

"Early to bed. I like to be up with the sun. With such hours everybody could keep themselves in fine condition. You're young now, but you should take care of yourself. People should follow the same hours animals do, and they would have the natural health of an animal."

Over her shoulder I could see the dance floor and the swimming pool, and I was pulled between my desire to quit her for people who were more interesting, and my reluctance to leave her alone. While she spoke, her bony fingers plucked at her chin. "I've got a green thumb," she said. "It's an unusual combination. I breed dogs and things grow under my thumb. Sometimes I think my father must have been meant to be a farmer because where else could it have developed in me?"

"Oh, look. There's your husband," I said with relief.

She called to him. He was some distance away, but at the sound of her voice he looked up with an exaggeration of surprise which betrayed he was not surprised at all, and came moving toward us. As he recognized me his expression changed for a moment, but all the same he shook my hand warmly. "Well, we meet again," he said broadly.

"Carlyle, I meant to ask you," Lottie Munshin went on in a worried voice, "are you going to try that favorite-food diet?"

"I'll give it a look," he said in a bored tone, and caught me by the arm. "Lottie, I have something to talk over with Sergius. You'll excuse us." And with no more than that he steered me under a yucca tree, and we stood in the harsh shadow made by a flood lamp above the fronds.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

Once again I explained that I had been invited by Herman Teppis.

"Eitel, too?"

When I nodded, Munshin burst out, "I wouldn't put it past Eitel to bring Elena here." As he shook his head with indignation, I began to laugh.

"It's a rotten party," I said, "it needs some kicks."

Munshin surprised me. A calculating expression came over his face and suddenly he looked like a very tough clown to me, a clown who in a quiet private way knew more than a few corners of the world. "It would be worth a lot of money to know what's in H.T.'s head," he muttered to himself, and walked away leaving me beside the yucca tree.

The party was becoming more active. People were going off by couples, or coming together at one center of interest or another. In a corner a game of charades was going on, the dance floor was nearly filled, a well-known comedian was performing for nothing, and an argument about a successful play almost killed the music of the rumba band. A drunk had managed to climb the boom which supported the papier-mâché camera, and he was quarreling with the cameraman who was trying to get him to go down. Nearby, his wife was laughing loudly. "Ronnie's a flagpole sitter," she kept announcing. The swimming instructor of the hotel was giving a diving exhibition in a roped-off portion of the pool, but only a few were watching her. I had a couple of drinks at the bar, and tried to work into one circle or another without success. Bored, I listened to a folk singer dressed like a leatherstocking, who sang old ballads in a quavery twang which could be heard above the dance orchestra. "Isn't he talented?" a woman said nearby.

I felt a tap on my shoulder. A blond man whom I recognized as the tennis professional of the Yacht Club smiled at me. "Come on over," he said, "somebody would like to meet you." It turned out to be the movie star, Teddy Pope. He was a tall man with an open expression and dark-brown hair which fell in a cowlick over his forehead. When I came up with the tennis player, he grinned at me.

"Isn't this party a dog?" Teddy Pope said.

We all smiled at one another. I could think of nothing to say. Beside Pope sat Marion Faye, looking small and bored. He only nodded at me.

"Do you know roulette?" the tennis player asked. "Teddy's an *aficionado*."

"I've been trying to get a system," Teddy said. "I had a theory about the numbers. But mathematically it was too much for my low intelligence. I hired a statistician to try to figure it out." He grinned at me again. "You a weight-lifter?" Teddy asked me.

"No. Should I be?"

This turned out to be very amusing. Pope and the tennis player and Marion Faye shared a long run of laughter. "I can bend an iron bar," Teddy said to me. "That is, if it's a slim enough iron bar. I just stay in weight-lifting to keep from getting fat. I'm getting so fat now." He pinched his belly to give a demonstration and was able to show an excess of flesh no thicker than a pencil. "It's disgusting."

"You look in good shape," I said uncomfortably.

"Oh, I'm pudgy," Pope said.

"Weight-lifting ruined your forehead," the tennis player said.

Teddy Pope made no answer. "I can see you're a flier," he said. "Is it true that most of you live for drinking and sex?" He leaned back and smiled at the sky. "Oh, there's a beauty," he said as a girl passed. "Would you like to meet her? Marion says you're a little shy."

"I'll make out."

"Why don't you help him, Teddy?" Marion jeered.

"I would just be a drag," Pope said.

"Sit down down, Sergei," said the tennis player.

"No. Well, you see," I said, "I promised to bring a drink to somebody."

"Come back if you get bored," Teddy said.

I was approached beneath another yucca tree by a little bald-headed man in a sky-blue tropical suit who had a tall red-headed girl by the hand. "Ah, there you are, I missed you before," he said briskly. "I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Bunny Zarrow, you may have heard of me. Actor's representative." I must have looked at him with surprise, for he added, "I see you were talking to Mr. Teppis. May I ask what you were talking about?"

"He wanted my advice on a movie."

"That's interesting. That's unusual. And what is your name?"

"John Yard," I said.

"You're under contract, I take it?"

"Of course."

"Well, a contract can sometimes be bettered. I wish I could place your name. I will say this is neither the time nor the opportunity, but you and I must have lunch to discuss it; I'll call you at the studio." He pointed to the girl beside him. "I'd like you to meet Candy Ballou." The girl yawned and then tried to smile. She was very drunk.

Bunny drew me aside. "Let me give you her phone number. She's a charming outgoing girl." He blinked his eyes. "I'm glad to do you a favor. If I weren't so overworked, I would keep her number, but it's a shame to keep such a girl to myself." He returned me to Candy Ballou and placed our hands together. "Now, kiddies, I'm sure you two have a great deal in common," he said, and left us looking at one another.

"Would you like to dance?" I asked the redheaded girl.

"Don't panic, love-bucket." She said this as if it were a password, and then opened her eyes to focus on me. "What studio you at?" she blurted.

"That's just a joke, Candy," I said.

"A joke on Zarrow, huh?"

"That's right."

"What do you do?"

"Nothing," I said.

"No dough. I might have known." She swayed her body to the rhythms of the rumba music and yawned fiercely. "Oh, honey," she said in a little broken voice, "if you had class, you'd help me to the ladies' room."

On my return from that errand with no more for company than a new highball, I saw Eitel come in at last. He was with a girl. Elena, I knew.

Chapter Nine

SHE WAS A NEAR-BEAUTY. Elena's hair was a rich red-brown and her skin was warm. She walked with a sense of her body, and I had always been drawn to that in a girl since my first year in the Air Force when like every other fly at an enlisted man's dance, I would cock my hat and try to steal prizes like Elena with my speed. Although she wore a lot of lipstick, and her high heels would have satisfied a show-girl, there was something delicate about her and very proud. She carried herself as if she were tall, and her strapless evening gown showed round handsome shoulders. Her face was not exactly soft, but it was heartshaped, and above a tender mouth and chin, the nares of her long narrow nose suggested ample aptitude to me. Munshin's description seemed passing poor.

Except that she was obviously not at ease. As I watched Eitel lead her into the mouth of the party she reminded me of an animal, ready for flight. Their appearance at the party had set off a ripple of confusion, and very few of the people who saw him knew what to do. There were several who smiled and even said hello, there were some who nodded, and even more who turned away, but I had the feeling they were all frightened. Until they knew the reason why Eitel had been invited, they could only feel the panic that whatever they did could be a mistake. It was grim the way he and Elena were left to cross the floor of the party without catching anybody to accompany them, and I saw Eitel stop finally at an empty table near the pool, set out a chair for Elena, and then sit down himself. From a distance, I had to like the way he succeeded in looking bored.

I went up to their table. "Can I join you?" I said clumsily.

Eitel gave me a quick grateful smile. "Elena, you must meet Sergius, he's the best person here."

"Oh, shut up," I told him, and turned to her. "I'm awfully sorry, I didn't catch your last name," I said.

"It's Esposito," Elena muttered, "an Italian name." Her voice was just a little hoarse, and surprisingly deep, which made it considerably less useful to her than her face, but it was a voice which had muffled strength in it. I had heard accents like that since I was a kid.

"Doesn't she look like a Modigliani?" Eitel said enthusiastically, and then added, "Elena, I know you've been told that more than once."

"Yes," Elena said, "that is, someone once told me. As a matter of fact it was your friend."

Eitel passed over the reference to Munshin. "But where did you get those green eyes?" he teased her. From the angle where I sat, I could see his fingers tapping restlessly on his knee.

"Oh, that's from my mother," Elena said. "She's half Polish. I guess I'm one-quarter Polish and three-quarters Italian. Oil and water." We all worked a little to laugh, and Elena shifted uncomfortably. "What a funny subject," she said.

Eitel made a play of studying the Laguna Room and said, "What do you think this party needs?"

"What?" I asked.

"A roller coaster."

Elena burst into laughter. She had a nice laugh which showed her white teeth, but she laughed too loudly. "Oh, that's so funny," she said.

"I love roller coasters," Eitel went on. "It's that first drop. Like the black hole of death. There's nothing to compare with it." And for the next two minutes he talked about roller coasters, until I could see by the look in Elena's eyes how alive he made the subject seem. He was in good form, and to draw him out, Elena was a good listener. I found myself thinking that she was not stupid, and yet she would only answer with a laugh or some little remark. It was the style of her attention. Her face gave back the shadow of everything he said, until Eitel was carried away. "It proves an old idea of mine," he said. "One gets on a roller coaster in order to feel certain emotions, and I wonder if it's not the same with an affair. When I was younger, I used to think it was ugly, even unclean I suppose, that a man who thought

he was in love would find himself using the same words with one girl after another. Yet there's nothing wrong about it really. The only true faithfulness people have is toward emotions they're trying to recapture."

"I don't know," Elena said. "I think a man like that wouldn't be feeling anything for the woman."

"On the contrary. At that moment, he adores her."

This confused her. "I mean," she interrupted, "you know, it's . . . oh, I'm not sure." But she could not let it pass. "A man like that isn't relating to the woman. He's detached."

Eitel looked pleased. "You're right," he reversed himself. "I suppose it's the proof of how detached I am."

"Oh, you can't be," she said.

"I certainly am," he smiled, as though to flag an advance warning.

It must have been hard to believe. His eyes were bright, his body leaned toward her, and his dark hair looked charged with energy.

"Don't judge by appearances," Eitel began, "why I can tell you . . ."

He broke off. Munshin was coming toward us. Elena's face lost all expression, and Eitel began to smile in an unnatural way.

"I don't know what it is you got," Collie boomed, "but H. T. told me to come over and say hello. He wants to talk to you later."

When none of us answered, Munshin contented himself with staring at Elena.

"Collie, how are you?" Eitel said finally.

"I've been better." He nodded his head. "I've been a lot better," he said, continuing to look at Elena.

"Aren't you having a good time?" she asked.

"No, I'm having a rotten time," Munshin answered.

"I was looking for your wife," Elena said, "but I don't know who she is."

"She's around," Munshin said.

"And your father-in-law? He's here, I heard you say."

"What difference does it make?" Munshin asked with a moist look as if he were really saying, "Someday you won't hate me any more."

"Oh, yes, no difference at all. I wouldn't want to embarrass you,"

Elena said, her voice all but out of control. It gave a hint of how badly she would act in a quarrel.

"I met Teddy Pope tonight," I interrupted as best I could. "What is he like?"

"I can tell you," Eitel said nimbly, "he's been in several of my pictures. And do you know, I think he's really sort of decent as an actor. Some day he may be very good."

At that moment, a beautiful blonde girl in a pale-blue evening gown came up behind Munshin and covered his eyes with her hands. "Guess who?" she said in a throaty voice. I had a glimpse of a little turned-up nose, a dimpled chin, and a pouting mouth I had seen before. At the sight of Eitel she made a face.

"Lulu," Munshin said, half rising from his chair, and not knowing if her interruption had helped the situation or made it worse, he hugged Lulu with fatherly arms, smiling at Elena and Eitel, while with his free hand visible only to me, he patted the small of her back as though to tell her she might do worse than to hug him again.

"Miss Meyers, Miss Esposito," Eitel said smoothly, and Lulu gave a passing nod to Elena. "Collie, we have to talk," Lulu said, "I have something I definitely want to tell you about." Then she gave a sweet smile to Eitel. "Charley, you're getting fat," she said.

"Sit down," Eitel offered.

She took a chair next to him, and told Munshin to sit on the other side. "Isn't anybody going to introduce the Air Force?" she asked directly of me, and when that was done, she made a game of studying my face. I forced myself to stare her down but it took something out of me. "What a pretty boy you are," said Lulu Meyers. She could not have been much more than twenty herself.

"She's great," Munshin said. "What a tongue."

"Would you like a drink?" I asked Elena. She hadn't said a word since Lulu had come, and by comparison she did not seem as attractive as I thought her before. Maybe aware of this herself, she picked nervously and savagely at the cuticle on her nail. "Oh, yes, I'd like a drink," Elena agreed, and as I started away, Lulu handed me her glass. "Get me a small Martin, will you?" she asked, turning violet-blue eyes on me. I realized she was as nervous as Elena, but in a different way; Lulu made herself sit easily in the chair—I had learned the same trick in flying school.

When I came back, she was talking to Eitel. "We miss you, old

ham,"

she was saying. "I don't know anybody I'd rather get drunk with than Eitel."

"I'm on the wagon," Eitel said with a grin.

"You're on the wagon as far as I'm concerned," Lulu said with a glance at Elena.

"I hear you're going to marry Teddy Pope," Eitel answered.

Lulu turned on Munshin. "You tell H. T. to lay off the drums," she said, and flipped her cigarette to the floor, grinding it out with a quick impatient motion. I had a peep at her legs and of little feet covered by silver slippers. Those legs were as familiar as the contour of her mouth, each drawn on one's memory by a hundred photographs, or was it a thousand? "Collie, this propaganda has got to stop, I tell you."

Munshin gave his sheepish smile. "Now, you relax, doll. Who's forcing you into anything?"

"I approve of Lulu marrying Teddy," Eitel drawled.

"Charley, you're a troublemaker," Munshin said quickly.

Elena and I looked at each other. She was trying very hard to be a part of this, her eyes following everyone who spoke, her smile forced as if she didn't want to seem ignorant. Probably I was acting the same way. We sat at opposite flanks of the conversation, no more than social book-ends.

"I'm serious," Lulu said. "You can tell Mr. T. I'll marry this pretty boy first," and she inclined a finger toward me.

"You haven't proposed yet," I said.

Elena laughed with enough pleasure to have said it herself. Again her laugh was too loud, and the others stared at her.

"Don't panic, love-bucket," Lulu said with an authority the redheaded girl, Candy Ballou, had not been able to muster. She held her empty glass up for us all to see, and poured its last drop on the floor. "I'm sad, Collie," she announced and laid her head on Munshin's shoulder.

"I saw your last picture," Eitel said to her.

"Wasn't I just awful in it?" Lulu made a face again. "They're ruining me. What did you think, Eitel?"

He smiled noncommittally. "I'll talk to you about it."

"I know what you'll say. I was performing too much, wasn't I?"

She raised her head and pinched Collie on the cheek. "I hate acting." And with hardly a pause she leaned forward to ask a question. "What do you do, Miss Esposito?"

"Esposito," Eitel said.

Elena was uncomfortable. "I've been . . . not exactly, a dancer, I guess."

"Modeling now?" Lulu said.

"No . . . I mean, of course not. . . ." Elena was not altogether helpless before her. "Different things," she finished at last. "Who wants to be a skinny model?"

"Oh, I'll bet," Lulu said, and spoke to me again. "You the latest tail on Eitel's old tattered kite?"

I could feel myself turning red. Her attacks came so fast that it was a little like waiting for the sound to stop in musical chairs. "They say you're through, Charley," Lulu went on.

"They certainly do talk about me," Eitel said.

"Not as much as you think. Time passes."

"I'll always be remembered as your second ex-husband," Eitel drawled.

"It's a fact," she said. "When I think of Charley Eitel, I think of number two."

Eitel smiled cheerfully. "If you want to put on the brass knuckles, Lulu, just give the word."

There was a moment, and then Lulu smiled back. "I'm sorry, Charley, I apologize." She turned to all of us, and in that husky voice which went along so nicely with her blonde hair and blue eyes, she said, "I saw an awful picture of me today in the papers."

"Lulu," Munshin said quickly, "we can rectify that. The photographers will be working soon."

"I won't be mugged with Teddy Pope," Lulu declared.

"Who's forcing you?" Munshin said.

"No tricks, Collie."

"No tricks," Munshin promised, wiping his face.

"Why are you perspiring so?" Lulu asked, and then broke off to stand up. "Jay-Jay!" she cried aloud, and opened her arms. Jennings James, who had just walked toward us, wrapped her to his skinny

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body in a parody of Munshin's bear-hug. "My favorite girl," he said in his high Southern voice.

"That was a bitchy release you had on me day before yesterday," Lulu said.

"Honey, you're paranoid," Jennings James told her. "I wrote it as a work of love to you." He nodded to all of us. "How are you, Mr. Munshin?" he said. The trip to the men's room seemed to have revived him.

"Take a chair, Jay-Jay," Munshin said, "this is Miss Esposito."

Jennings James bowed formally to her. "I love the dignity of Italian women, Miss Esposito." His freckled hand smoothed his red hair. "Are you going to stay with us long in Desert D'Or?"

"I'm going back tomorrow," Elena said.

"Oh, you're not," Eitel said.

"Well, I'm not sure," Elena corrected herself.

A waiter brought ice cream. It was melted on the plates, and only Elena took a dish. "This is soft ice cream, isn't it?" she said. "That's the expensive kind, I've heard." When everybody looked puzzled by the remark, Elena became a little desperate in the attempt to prove it. "I don't remember where I heard, but I did see it advertised, soft ice cream, I mean, or maybe I was eating it, I don't know."

Eitel came to her aid. "It's true. Duvon's in the city features a sort of melted ice cream. I've had it myself. But I don't think this is Duvon's, Elena."

"Oh, no, I know it isn't," she said quickly.

Jay-Jay turned back to Lulu. "Honey, we're ready for the pictures. Those photographers have finished grossifying themselves, and it all waits on you."

"Well, let it wait," said Lulu. "I want another drink."

"Mr. T. asked me specially to get you."

"Come on, let's go," said Munshin, "everybody." I think he included Elena, Eitel, and myself to prevent Lulu from deciding she wanted to stay with us. Once on his feet, Munshin took her arm and started along the edge of the pool past the dance floor toward a group of photographers I could see gathered near the papier-mâché movie camera.

Jay-Jay brought up the rear with me. "That Esposito dame," he said, "she's Munshin's little gal, I hear."

"I don't know," I said.

"Oh, man, she's a dish. I never got my hooks into her, but I know some who have. When old Charley Eitel gets done with Esposito, you ought to spend a couple of delicious hours with her." He then started to give me details of how good she was supposed to be. "And she looks like a sweet kid, too," he added gallantly. "It's hard for a girl living in the capital. I don't hold it against any of them. Why, Teppis himself, that son of a bitch . . ." But Jay-Jay had no time to finish the sentence for we had come up to the photographers.

I could see Teddy Pope moving in from another direction. The tennis player still was with him, and they were laughing at some private joke. "Lulu, honey," Pope said, and held out his hand to shake hers. They touched fingertips and stood side by side.

"Now, fellows," said Jay-Jay springing forward and talking to the three photographers who stood phlegmatically in front of the camera boom, "we want some human-interest stills. Nothing elaborate. Just how cinema folks live and entertain each other. You got the idea." People were coming over from various corners of the Laguna Room. "Honeybun, you look lovely," Dorothea O'Faye called out, and Lulu smiled. "Thank you, sweetie," she called back. "Hey, Teddy," a man said, "have your autograph?" and Teddy laughed. Standing before an audience, his manner had changed. He seemed more boyish and more direct. "Why, here comes Mr. T. now," he said aloud, and showing a crack disdain to those who could see it, he began to clap his hands, and at least a dozen of the people near him, trapped into obedience, applauded as well. Teppis held his arm aloft. "We're taking some pictures tonight of Teddy and Lulu, not only for interest on their picture, or should I say *our* picture, *An Inch From Heaven*, but as a symbol, as I would call it, of tonight and the kind of good time we've had." Teppis cleared his throat and smiled sweetly. His presence had succeeded in drawing even more people, and for a while the scene was busy with the flash-bulbs of the cameras, the shifting of positions, and the directions given by the photographers. I saw Teppis in place between Teddy and Lulu, Lulu between the two men, Teddy

and Lulu together, Teddy and Lulu apart, Teppis holding Lulu's hand in a fatherly way, Teppis photographed with his hand on Teddy's elbow. I was struck by how well they did it, Teddy smiling, happy, healthy, and Lulu sweet. Lulu demure, Lulu ready, all with an ease which balanced the pride of Herman Teppis. It was just about perfect. Teddy Pope turned his face to every instruction of the photographers, his voice had sincerity, his smile seemed to enjoy his surroundings. He waved his hands in the air like a prizefighter, and gave a play of having wrenched his shoulder from the exercise; he put his arm around Lulu's waist, he kissed her cheek. And Lulu with a cuddling curving motion slipped against his side. She seemed to bounce when she walked, her shoulders swayed in a little rhythm with her hips, her neck curved, her hair tumbled in gold ringlets over her head, and her husky voice laughed at everyone's jokes. I thought she was about as beautiful as any girl I had ever seen.

When the photographers were done, Teppis made another speech. "You never know. We're a big family at Supreme. I'll tell you something. I don't think these two kids were acting." And with a hand against each of their backs, he pushed them together until they had to hug each other in order not to trip. "What's this I hear, Lulu?" he said aloud to the laughter of the guests, "a little ladybug has told me you and Teddy are dear friends."

"Oh, Mr. Teppis," Lulu said in her sweetest voice, "you should have been a marriage broker."

"It's a compliment. I take it as a compliment," Teppis said. "A producer is always making marriages. Art and finance. Talent and an audience. Are you all having a good time tonight?" he asked of the guests watching, and I listened to more than one answer that a good time was being had. "Treat the camera boys," Teppis said to Jay-Jay, and walked off with Lulu on his arm. The crowd faded, the photographers were left to pack their equipment. Beside the pool, I saw Teppis stop to talk to Eitel, and while he spoke he looked at Elena.

I could see that Teppis recognized her name the moment Eitel introduced her, for Teppis' reaction followed quickly. His back stiffened, his ruddy face seemed to swell, and he said something, some-

thing to the point, since Eitel and Elena turned away immediately.

Alone with Lulu, Teppis was mopping his forehead with a silk handkerchief. "Go dance with Teddy," I heard him say hoarsely as I approached. "Do it as a favor for me."

Because of the crowd I could no longer see what had happened to Eitel.

Lulu caught my eye. "Mr. T., I want to dance with Sergius first," she said with a pout, and slipping away from Teppis she put her hand in my palm and drew me to the dance floor. I held her tightly. The liquor I had been drinking all evening was finally beginning to do its work.

"How long will it take," I said in her ear, "before you start to look for Teddy?"

To my surprise she took this meekly. "You don't know what I'm up against," Lulu said.

"Why? Do you know?"

"Oh, don't be like that, Sergius. I like you." At the moment she seemed no more than eighteen. "It's harder than you think," she whispered, and by the softness with which she held herself, I found it hard to believe in the first impression she made on me. She seemed young; spoiled maybe, but very sweet.

We danced in silence. "What did Teppis say to Eitel?" I asked finally.

Lulu shook her head and then giggled. "He told Charley to get the hell out."

"Well, then I guess I have to go too," I told her.

"You weren't included."

"Eitel is my friend," I said.

She pinched my ear. "Wonderful. Charley will love that. I have to tell him when I see him."

"Leave with me," I said.

"Not yet."

I stopped dancing. "If you want," I said, "I'll ask Mr. T. for permission."

"You think I'm afraid of him."

"You're not afraid of him. You'll just end up dancing with Teddy."

Lulu began to laugh. "You're different from what I thought at first."

"That's just liquor."

"Oh, I hope not."

Reluctantly, in a sort of muse, she allowed me to take her from the dance floor. "This is an awful mistake," she whispered.

Yet Lulu was not exactly timorous when we passed Teppis. Like a promoter who counts the seats in the house, he stood near the entrance, his eyes adding up the scene. "Girlie," he said, gripping her by the arm, "where are you going?"

"Oh, Mr. T.," Lulu said like a bad child, "Sergius and I have so much to talk about."

"We want to get some air," I said, and I took the opportunity to give him a finger in the ribs.

"Air?" He was indignant as we left. "Air?" I could see him looking for the ceiling of the Laguna Room. Behind us, still in operation, the papier-mâché camera rotated on its wooden boom, the searchlights lifting columns to the sky. A pall lay over the party. The zenith had passed, and couples were closed into tête-à-têtes on the couches, for the drunken hour had come where everything is possible and everybody wants everybody; if desires were deeds, the history of the night would end in history.

"You say to Charley Eitel," Teppis shouted after me, "that he's through. I tell you he's through. He's lost his chance."

Giggling at the sound of his rage, Lulu and I ran along the walks and over the little trellised bridges of the Yacht Club until we came to the parking circle. Once, underneath a Japanese lantern, I stopped to kiss her, but she was laughing too hard and our mouths didn't meet. "I'll have to teach you," she said.

"Teach me nothing. I hate teachers," I said, and holding her hand, pulled her behind me, her heels clicking, her skirt rustling in the promising tap-and-whisper of a girl trying to run in an evening gown.

We had an argument over whose car to take. Lulu insisted on using her convertible. "I'm cooped up, Sergius," she said, "I want to

drive." "Then drive my car," I compromised, but she would have no other way than her own. "I won't leave," she said, driven to a pitch of stubbornness, "I'll go back to the party."

"You're frightened," I taunted her.

"I'm not."

She drove badly. She was reckless, which I expected, but what was worse, she could not hold her foot steady on the pedal. The automobile was always slowing or accelerating and drunk as I was she made me aware of danger. But that wasn't the danger I was worrying about.

"I'm a nut," she'd say.

"Let's park, nut," I would answer. "Let's cut the knot."

"Did you ever go to the crazy doctor?" Lulu asked.

"You don't need him."

"Oh, I need something," she said, and with a wrench, gravel stinging our fenders, she brought the car off the shoulder and on the road again.

"Let's park," I said.

She parked when she would have it. I had given up hope. I was prepared to sit politely while she skidded us off the highway and we rolled and smacked at seventy miles an hour through the cactus and desert clay. But Lulu decided we might just as well live a little while longer. Picking a side road at random, she screamed around the turn, slowed down once it was past, drifted along, and finally pulled off in some deserted flat, the night horizon lying all around us in a giant circle.

"Lock the windows," she said, engrossed in pressing the button which raised the canvas top.

"It'll be too hot," I argued.

"No, the windows have to be closed," she insisted.

All preparations spent, she turned in her seat and took my kiss. She must have felt she had let loose a bull, and in fact she had; for the first time in almost a year I knew that I would be all right.

Yet it was not so easy as that. She would give herself to my mouth and my arms, she would be about to be caught, and then she would start away, looking fearfully through the car window. "There's a man coming," she would whisper, her nails digging my wrist, and I would

be forced to lift my head and scan the horizon, forced to stop and say, "There's no one around, can't you see?"

"I'm scared," she would say, and give her mouth to me again. How long it went on I do not know, but it was a classic. She coaxed me forward, she pushed me back, she allowed me a strip of her clothing only to huddle away like a bothered virgin. We could have been kids on a couch. My lips were bruised, my body suffered, my fingers were thick, and if I succeeded finally in capturing what clothing she wore beneath her evening dress, pushing it behind me in the seat like a mad jay stuffing its nest, I still could not inspire Lulu to give up her gown. Though she allowed the most advanced forays and even let me for one, two, and three beats of the heart, she sat up with a little motion that pushed me away, and looked through the windows. "There's someone coming. There's somebody on the road," she said, and pinched me when I tried to come near her.

"This is it," I told her, but for all I told her, high-water mark had been reached. For another hour, no matter what I did, how I forced, how I waited, and how I tried, I could not get so close again. The dawn must have been not too far away when exhausted, discouraged, and almost indifferent, I shut my eyes and murmured, "You win." With a weary hand I passed over my cache of her door-prizes and lay back against the seat.

Tenderly, she kissed my lashes, her fingernails teased my cheek. "You're sweet," she whispered, "you're really not so rough." To revive me, she pulled my hair. "Kiss me, Sergius," she said as if I had not yet done anything at all, and in the next minute while I lay back on the seat, not believing and almost dumb to her giving, I was led to discover the mysterious brain of a movie star. She gave herself gently to me, she was delicate, she was loving, loving even to the modesty with which she whispered that this was all very unplanned, and I must be considerate. So I was obliged to take the trip alone, and was repaid by having her cuddle in my arms.

"You're wonderful," she said.

"I'm just an amateur."

"No, you're wonderful. Oooh, I like you. You!"

On the way back I drove the car while she curled beside me, her

head on my shoulder. The radio was on and we hummed to the music. "I was crazy tonight," she said.

I adored her. The way she had treated everybody when I met her made this even better. For on that long drive she took me before we parked, I had told myself that absolutely I had to succeed with her, and the memory of this feeling now that I had succeeded was fine. Maybe it was no more than that enough time had gone by, but I felt all right, I felt ready—for what, I hardly knew. But I had made it, and with what a girl.

Lulu was tense when we kissed good night outside her door. "Let me stay," I said.

"No, not tonight." She looked behind her to see if the walks were deserted.

"Then come to my house."

She kissed me on the nose. "I'm just beaten, Sergius." Her voice was the voice of a child.

"All right, I'll see you tomorrow."

"Call me." She kissed me again, she blew a kiss as she disappeared through the door, and I was left alone in the labyrinth of the Yacht Club, the first sun of desert morning not far away, the foliage a pale-blue like the pale-blue of her gown.

It may sound weird, but I was so excited with enthusiasm that I had to share it, and I could think of nobody but Eitel. It did not even occur to me that he might still be with Elena, or that as the ex-husband of little Lulu, he would not necessarily find my story a dream. I don't know whether I even remembered that Lulu had been married to him. In a way, she had no existence for me before tonight, and if she seemed bigger than life, she was also without life. How I loved myself then. With the dawn spreading out from me until it seemed to touch the Yacht Club with its light, I began to think of those mornings when I was out on a flight which started in the darkness of the hangars, the syrup of coffee on my tongue, the blast of my plane flaring two long fires into the night. We would take off an hour before dawn, and when morning came to meet us five miles high in the air with the night clouds warmed by a gold and silver light, I used to believe I could control the changes of the sky by a sway of my body as it was swelled by the power of the plane, and I had played with magic. For it was

magic to fly an airplane; it was a gimmick and a drug. We knew that no matter what happened on ground, no matter how little or confusing we ourselves could be, there would always come those hours when we were alone in formation and on top of life, and so the magic was in the flight and the flight made us very cool, you know? and there was nothing which could happen once we were down which could not be fixed when the night went into the west and we ganged after it on our wings.

I had been careful to forget all of this, I had liked it too much, and it had not been easy to think that I probably would never have any magic again; but on this dawn with the taste of Lulu still teasing me, I knew that I could have something else, and I could be sad for those airplanes I deserted because there was something to take their place.

Thinking this, or thinking of such things, I started up the path to where I parked my car. Halfway, I sat on a bench underneath a bower of shrubbery, breathing the new air. Everything had come to rest around me. Then, in a cottage nearby I heard sudden brawling sounds, a mixed dialogue or two, and a door in the wall opened and Teddy Pope lurched out, wearing a sweater and dungarees, but his feet were bare. "You bitch," he shouted at the door.

"Stay out," came the voice of the tennis player. "I don't want to tell you again." Teddy cursed. He cursed at such length and in so loud a voice that I was sure everybody sleeping nearby must be reaching for their pills. The door in the bungalow opened again, and Marion Faye came outside. "Go beat your meat, Teddy," he said in his quiet voice, and then he stepped back inside and shut the door. Teddy turned around once and looked past me with blank eyes which took me in, or maybe didn't see anything at all.

I watched him stagger along the wall, and in spite of myself I followed at a distance. In one of the minor patios of the Yacht Club where a fountain, a few yucca trees, and a hedge of bougainvillea set up an artificial nook, Teddy Pope stopped and made a phone call from an outdoor booth set under a trellis of rambler roses. "I can't go to sleep like this," he said into the receiver. "I've got to talk to Marion." The voice at the other end made some answer.

"Don't hang up," Teddy Pope said loudly.

Like a night watchman making his rounds, Herman Teppis came

into sight along one of the walks. He approached Teddy Pope, came up beside him, and slammed the receiver on its cradle.

"You're a disgraceful human being," Herman Teppis said, and kept on down the walk without saying another word.

Teddy Pope wobbled away and came to rest against a joshua tree. He leaned on it as if it were his mother. Then he began to cry. I had never seen a man so drunk. Sobbing, hiccupping, he tried to chew on the bark of the tree. I backed away, I wanted nothing so much as to disappear. When I was out of sight, I heard Pope scream. "You bastard, Teppis," he cried out into the empty dawn, "you know what you can do, you fat bastard, Teppis," and I could picture his cheek on the joshua tree. I drove slowly home, making no attempt to find Eitel after all.

where it's hiding in me." Elena kissed him when the movie was done. "I love you," she said. "You'll do a wonderful strong movie like this again." And Eitel, frightened beyond fright, knew his vacation was over, and he must begin again that script, that skeleton of an art work he had until now been unable to create.

Chapter Twelve

I HAD NEVER KNOWN a girl like Lulu, nor had I ever been in such a romance. Of course I had had my share of other girls—one doesn't go through the Air Force without learning something about women—but I had always been a poor detective and ladies were way ahead of me.

Yet I think Lulu would have had her surprises for any man. I couldn't tell from one hour to the next if we were in love or about to break up, whether we would make love or fight, do both or do nothing at all. The first time I saw her again, she was with friends and never let me be alone with her; the next day she came to visit my house and not only made it easy, but told me she was in love. Naturally, I told her the same. It would have been hard not to, and for sure I was in love if love is the time to do nothing else. Before she left, we had a quarrel; we would never see each other again. A half hour later she telephoned me from the Yacht Club and burst into tears. We loved each other after all.

It was out of control, beyond a doubt. I was able to discover emotions I never knew I owned, and I must have enjoyed it as much as Lulu. So I thought by virtue of the things we did I would put my mark on her forever. What she may have intended as a little dance was a track and field event to me, and I would snap the tape with burning lungs, knotted muscles, and mind set on the need to break a record. It was the only way I could catch her and for three minutes keep her.

Like a squad of worn-out infantrymen who are fixed for the night in a museum, my pleasure was to slash tapestries, poke my fingers through nude paintings, and drop marble busts on the floor. Then I could feel her as something I had conquered, could listen to her wounded breathing, and believe that no matter how she acted other times, these moments were Lulu, as if her flesh murmured words more real than her lips. To the pride of having so beautiful a girl was added the bigger pride of knowing that I took her with the cheers of millions behind me. Poor millions with their low roar! They would never have what I had now. They could shiver outside, make a shrine in their office desk or on the shelf of their olive-drab lockers, they could look at the pin-up picture of Lulu Meyers. I knew I was good when I carried a million men on my shoulder.

But if I caught her in bed, I caught her nowhere else. There were days when Lulu told me to leave her alone, there were other days when she would not let me quit her for a minute, but the common denominator was that I had to follow every impulse. I could go over at noon to her suite in the Yacht Club after a summons by phone; she would be decided that we go horseback riding in the desert. I would arrive to find her still in bed. Breakfast had not yet come, would I have coffee with her? The moment room service left a tray, Lulu told me she wanted a Stinger.

"I don't know how to make Stingers," I would answer.

"Oh, sweetie, everybody knows how to make a Stinger. There's brandy, crème de menthe. What did you do in the Air Force, milk a cow?"

"Lulu, are we going horseback riding?"

"Yes, we're going horseback riding." She would hold up a mirror, study her face with the stare of a beauty-parlor operator, and stick out her tongue at the reflection. "Do I look good without make-up?" she would ask in a professional tone which allowed no nonsense.

"You look very good."

"My mouth's a little too thin."

"It wasn't last night," I would say.

"Oh, you. A corpse could satisfy you." But she would hug me matter-of-factly. "I love you, darling," she would say.

"Let's go horseback riding."

"Do you know, Sergius, you're neurotic."

"I'm neurotic. I can't stand to waste a day."

"Well, I don't feel like getting on a horse," Lulu would decide.

"I knew you wouldn't. I didn't want to either."

"Then why did you wear jodphurs?"

"Because if I didn't wear them, you would want to go."

"Oh, I'm not like that." Sitting in bed, she would hug herself, her beautiful face arched above her cool throat. "Honest, I'm not."

The phone would ring. It would be a call from New York. "No, I'm not marrying Teddy Pope," she would say to a columnist. "Of course, he's a son of a bitch. Yes, say we're good friends and that's all. Good-bye, sweetie." She would hang up, she would groan. "That stupid press agent I've got. If you can't handle a gossip columnist what kind of press agent are you?"

"Why don't you let him try?"

"He's beyond hunger."

So it would go. About the time I was past exasperated she would begin to dress. The coffee was cold she would tell me and call room service for more. I would lose my temper. I was definitely leaving I would tell her. She would run after me and catch me at the door. She knew I was willing to be caught. "I'm a bitch, I tell you," she would say. "I was trying to get you mad."

"You never came near."

"You'll end up hating me. You will. Nobody likes me who really knows me. Even I don't like myself."

"You love yourself."

She would grin delightfully. "It's not the same thing. Sergius, let's go horseback riding."

Finally we would go. She was always dawdling or at a gallop. One time we were riding around an abandoned wooden fence and she told me to jump it. I told her I wouldn't because I was a bad jumper. It was an honest estimate. I had been riding for a month.

"The lousiest stunt man will fall on his ass for fifty bucks," she said, "but you won't try anything."

Actually, I wanted to jump. I had the anticipation of falling and Lulu nursing me. That was a part of our affair which had never been tried. When I took the jump, and I thought it was a good one, I turned

around for her applause and saw her trotting away in the opposite direction. For all I knew she hadn't even looked. After I caught up to her she turned on me. "You're a baby. Only a second-rater would take a stupid dare like that."

We rode back without a word. When we reached the Yacht Club, she went into her cabaña, came out in a bathing suit, and talked to everybody but me. The only time our eyes met, she held out her glass as she had done the night of the party, and said, "Sugar, get me a small Martin."

Her caution when our affair began was often a chore. She used to come to my house on foot, or she would admit me to her room only after dark. "They'll crucify me when they find out," she would complain, "look at Eitel," that way comparing me to Elena. About his affair she was furious. "Eitel never had any taste," she would say. "Any tramp who tells him he's terrific can always sell him a ticket to her favorite charity." And once when we met them on the street, she was hardly easy on Elena. "I bet she has dirty underwear," Lulu said. "You watch. She's going to be fat as a bull." When I argued that I liked Elena, Lulu became sullen. "Oh, sure, she's the underdog," Lulu snapped. Yet, a few hours later, she said to me, "You know, Sugar, maybe it would have been better if I had to struggle. Maybe my character would be better." Her finger to her chin, she asked, "Am I really a bore?"

"Only when you're vertical . . . says the Irish in me."

"You'll pay for that." And she chased me around with a pillow. When she had finished pounding me, she made me lie down beside her. "I'm awful, but Strong-Arm O'Shaugnessy, I want to be good. It was terrible with Eitel. He would laugh at me and some of his friends were intellectually very overbearing." She giggled. "When I was with Eitel, I used to study to be an intellectual."

If she had been decided to keep our affair a secret, she changed her mind one day by sitting on my lap at the Yacht Club pool. "You ought to try Sugar some time," she said to several of her women friends, "he's not bad at all." Which depressed me. Because I knew if I was really good, she wouldn't give her friends a clue. For a few days she couldn't walk in public without my arm around her. Pictures were

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taken of us by night-club photographers. I got up one morning to find Lulu by my bed, a gossip column in her hand. "Look at it. How awful!" she said to me. I read the following:

Atom Bomb Lulu Meyers and the potential next Mr. Meyers, ex-Marine Corps Captain Silgius McShonessy, scion of an Eastern-or-is-it-Midwestern fortune, are setting off those Geiger counters in Desert D'Or.

I didn't know if I was more pleased or more horrified. "Don't they ever get a name right?" I blustered. Lulu began to tickle me. "You know that's not bad. They could have been a lot nastier," she said. "Atom Bomb Lulu Meyers. Do you think people really think of me that way?"

"Of course they don't. You know your press agent wrote it."

"I don't care. It's still interesting." Like so many name-people in Desert D'Or, it didn't matter to Lulu that the news came from her. Seeing the printed lines made an alchemy; I know our affair was more real to her. "Geiger counters," Lulu said thoughtfully, "that's a smart line, publicity-wise. Oh, he's a good press agent. I'm going to call him in a day or two."

Now that our romance was publicly big, or better, torrid, Lulu started to confuse people again. "They make Sugar sound so good in the newspapers," she said one night to some people in a bar, "that I'll really try him. I really will, Sugar." And she gave me a sisterly kiss. Older sister.

We soon found something new to fight about. I discovered that to make love to Lulu was to make myself a scratch-pad to the telephone. It was always ringing, and no moment was long enough to keep her from answering. Her delight was to pass the first few rings. "Don't be so nervous, Sugar," she would say, "let the switchboard suffer," but before the phone had screamed five times, she would pick it up. Almost always, it was business. She would be talking to Herman Teppis, or Munshin who was back in the capital, or a writer, or her director for the next picture, or an old boy friend, or once her hairdresser—Lulu was interested in a hair-do she had seen. The

conversation could not go on for two minutes before she was teasing me again; to make love and talk business was a double-feature to her.

"Of course I'm being a good girl, Mr. Teppis," she would say, giving me a wink. "How can you think these things of me?" As the end in virtuosity, she succeeded one time in weeping through a phone call with Teppis while rendering a passage with me.

I would try to get her to visit my place but she had grown an aversion. "It depresses me, Sugar, it's in such bland taste." For a while everything would be bland. Her own place was now spoiled by that word, and one day she told the management to have her room suite redecorated. Between morning and evening its beige walls were painted to a special blue, which Lulu claimed was her best color. Now she lay with her gold head on pale-blue linen, ordering pink roses and red roses from the telephone; the florist at the Yacht Club promised to arrange them himself. She would buy a dress and give it to her maid before she had even worn it, she would complain she had not a thing to wear. Her new convertible she traded in one afternoon for the same model in another color, and yet the exchange cost her close to a thousand dollars. When I reminded her that she had to drive the new car slowly until it accumulated the early mileage, she hired a chauffeur to trundle it through the desert and spare her the bother. Her first phone bill from the Yacht Club was five hundred dollars.

Yet when it came to making money she was also a talent. While I knew her, negotiations were on for a three-picture contract. She would phone her lawyers, they would call her agent, the agent would speak to Teppis, Teppis would speak to her. She asked a big price and got more than three quarters of it. "I can't stand my father," she explained to me, "but he's a gambler at business. He's wonderful that way." It came out that when she was thirteen and going to a school for professional children in the capital, Magnum Pictures wanted to sign her to a seven-year contract. "I'd be making a stinking seven hundred and fifty a week now like all those poor exploited schnooks, but daddy wouldn't let me. 'Free-lance,' he said, he talks that way, 'this country was built on free-lance.' He's just a chiropodist with holdings in real estate, but he knew what to do for me." Her toes nibbled at the telephone cord. "I've noticed that about men. There's a kind of man

who never can make money for himself. Only for others. That's my father."

Of her father and mother, Lulu's opinion changed by the clock. One round it would be her father who was marvelous. "What a bitch my mother is. She just squeezed all the manhood out of him. Poor daddy." Her mother had ruined her life, Lulu explained. "I never wanted to be an actress. She made me one. It's her ambition. She's just an . . . octopus." Several phone calls later, Lulu would be chatting with her mother. "Yes, I think it gives me hives," she would say of some food, "glycerine, will that do, mommie? . . . He's what? . . . He's acting up again. . . . Well, you tell him to leave you alone. I wouldn't put up with it if I were you. I would have divorced him long ago. I certainly would. . . ."

"I don't know what I'd do without her," Lulu would say on hanging up the phone, "men are terrible," and she would have nothing to do with me for the next half hour.

It took me longer than it need have taken to realize that the heart of her pleasure was to show herself. She hated holding something in. If Lulu felt like burping, she would burp; if it came up that she wanted to put cold cream on her face, she would do it while entertaining half a dozen people. So it went with her acting. She could say to a stranger that she was going to be the greatest actress in the world. Once, talking to a stage director, she was close to tears because the studio never gave her a part in a serious picture. "They ruin me," she complained. "People don't want glamour, they want acting. I'd take the smallest role if it was something I could get my teeth into." Still, she quarreled for three days running, and how many hours on the telephone I could never guess, because Munshin who was producing her next picture would not enlarge her part. Publicity, she announced, was idiotic, but with her instinct for what was good to an adolescent, she did better than cooperate with photographers. The best ideas always came from Lulu. One sortie when she was photographed sipping a soda she shaped the second straw into a heart, and the picture as it was printed in the newspapers showed Lulu peeping through the heart, coy and cool. On the few times I would be allowed to spend the night with her, I would wake up to see Lulu writing an idea for publicity in the

notebook she kept on her bed table, and I had a picture of her marriage to Eitel, each of them with his own notebook and own bed table. With pleasure, she would expound the subtleties of being well photographed. I learned that the core of her dislike for Teddy Pope was that each of them photographed best from the left side of the face, and when they played a scene together Teddy was as quick as Lulu not to expose his bad side to the camera. "I hate to play with queers," she complained. "They're too smart. I thought I had mumps when I saw myself. Boy, I threw a scene." Lulu acted it for my private ear. "You've ruined me, Mr. Teppis," she shrieked. "There's no chivalry left."

For odd hours, during those interludes she called at her caprice, things had come around a bit. To my idea of an interlude which must have left her exhausted, she coached me by degrees to something different. Which was all right with me. Lulu's taste was for games, and if she lay like a cinder under the speed of my sprints, her spirits improved with a play. I was sure no two people ever had done such things nor even thought of them. We were great lovers I felt in my pride; I had pity for the hordes who could know none of this. Yes, Lulu was sweet. She would never allow comparison. This was the best. I was superb. She was superb. We were beyond all. Unlike Eitel who now could not bear to hear a word of Elena's old lovers, I was charitable to all of Lulu's. Why should I not be? She had sworn they were poor sticks to her Sugar. I was even so charitable that I argued in Eitel's defense. Lulu had marked him low as a lover, and in a twist of friendship my heart beat with spite. I stopped that quickly enough, I had an occasional idea by now of when Lulu was lying, and I wanted to set Eitel at my feet, second to the champion. It pleased me in my big affair that I had such a feel for the ring.

We played our games. I was the photographer and she was the model; she was the movie star and I was the bellhop; she did the queen, I was slave. We even met even to even. The game she loved was to play the bobby-soxer who sat with a date in the living room and was finally convinced, always for the first time naturally enough. She was never so happy as when we acted at theater and did the mime on clouds of myth. I was just young enough to want nothing but to be alone with her. It was not even possible to be tired. Each time she gave

~~the~~ signal, and I could never know, not five minutes in advance, when ^{it} would happen, my appetite was sharp, dressed by the sting of what I ^{suffered} offered in public.

To eat a meal with her in a restaurant became the new torture. It ^{didn't} matter with what friends she found herself nor with what ^{enemies} enemies, her attention would go, her eye would flee. It always seemed ^{to} her as if the conversation at another table was more interesting than ^{what} that she heard at her own. She had the worry that she was missing a word of gossip, a tip, a role in a picture, a financial transaction, a . . . it did not matter; something was happening somewhere else, something of importance, something she could not afford to miss. Therefore, eating with her was like sleeping with her; if one was cut by the telephone, the other was rubbed by her itch to visit from table to table, sometimes dragging me, sometimes parking me, until I had to wonder what mathematical possibility there was for Lulu to eat a meal in sequence since she was always having a bit of soup here and a piece of pastry there, joining me for breast of squab, and taking off to greet new arrivals whose crabmeat cocktail she nibbled on. There was no end, no beginning, no surety that one would even see her during a meal. I remember a dinner when we went out with Dorothea O'Faye and Martin Pelley. They had just been married and Lulu treasured them. Dorothea was an old friend, a dear friend, Lulu promised me, and before ten minutes she was gone. When Lulu finally came back, she perched on my lap and said in a whisper the others could hear, "Sugar, I tried, and I couldn't make doo-doo. Isn't that awful? What should I eat?"

Five minutes later she outmaneuvered Pelly to pick up the check.

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IAKOSKI (231) From: The Deer Park

nice if you use me as the excuse. You see, you may be doing me no favor." Then he stared into my face for a long time, and he looked stern. "Are you sure," he said at last, "that you don't want the career . . . and the money . . . and the rest of it? Are you sure you don't really want to be an actor?" And he went on to tell me about his talk with Collie.

As he spoke, I felt a touch of sickness. It was no more than a turn in my stomach and an instant when I felt pale, but I had one of those hints of what cold and violent ambition had been stifling in me for so many years, and it was as if deep inside two powerful hands fought each other forward and back, locked in a test of strength which left room for little else.

"You see," Eitel was saying into my ear, "it took me until now to realize I wanted such things very much, and that was why I stayed in the capital."

I could hardly answer him. I sat there sick at what I had found. "You're right," I said, and I suppose my voice shook. "I guess I was trying to put it off on you."

"Maybe you were," he said, and then leaned forward. "I'll tell you a little of what I think. I think you should pass this offer by if there's something you want to do more. But that is what you have to know."

~~I nodded at this.~~ "What do you think of me being a writer?" I asked Eitel slowly.

"Well, Sergius, that's hard to say."

"I know. I brought something along I wrote a couple of weeks ago. It's a poem. Just a stunt." I had hoped I wouldn't have to show it—I had written it after waking up from a dream—but I reached into my pocket and handed him the piece of paper. "I like to play with words," I mumbled.

"Sergius, do shut up, and let me read your masterpiece."

This was the poem:

THE DRUNK'S BEBOP AND CHOWDER

Shirred athe inlechercent felloine namelled Shash
Head tea lechnocerous hero calmed Asshy

Befwen hes prunt cuddlenot riles fora lash
Whenfr hir cunck woodled lyars affordelay?

"Yi munt seech tyt und speets tytsh"
"I-uh wost tease toty ant tweeks tlotty"

"And/or atuftit n pladease slit,"
"N ranty off itty indisplacent,"

"Frince Yrhome washt balostilted ina laydy."
"Sinfor her romesnot was lowbilt inarouter dayly."

When he finished it, he laughed. "It's amusing, I guess. I didn't realize how much you're under the influence of Joyce."

I knew I was going to make a fool of myself, but for once I didn't care. "Who's Joyce?" I asked.

"James Joyce. You've read him, of course?"

"No. I think I heard the name though.

Eitel picked up my poem and read it through again. "Isn't that odd?" he said.

There was one thing I wanted to take home with me. "You think I'm talented?" I asked.

"I'm beginning to have that suspicion about you, yes."

~~"Oh," I nodded. "I... well..."~~ So much talk was coming up in me, so much enthusiasm. I felt as old as a ten-year-old boy, and it was a relief to feel that way with somebody I could trust.

~~"Do you mind if I talk about why I never thought of being a professional fighter?"~~ I asked him.

~~"I always thought it was because you didn't want to get your brains scrambled."~~

~~"Well, yes," I said, "do you know that's exactly it. I was afraid of that. How did you know?"~~

~~He only smiled.~~

~~"Charley, I was afraid all the time. There are fighters like that, you know, and some of them even get to be half way competent, but that's not the way to be. Not to go in scared every time."~~

~~"Maybe the boys you fought felt the same way."~~

1950-1953

The COLD WAR-IV

HUBBARD AT YALE

1950-1953

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"—is that not the most painful cry one can utter in adolescence?—but now I was gifted with judgment. I kept my mouth shut."

"You're planning to go to Yale?"

"Yessir."

"I'd say, short of a collapse on entrance exams, it can be granted you will get in. Yale is perfect. I call it Uncle Cabin."

I laughed.

"Oh, yes," said my new associate, Harlot, "part of the unround railway. One of the stations on the route. At least for you." He made a face. "As an old Harvard man, I don't like this, but Yale is a touch niftier to our purposes. Harvard quiffy about recruitment. It's a stinking irony since half of real people did happen to go there. Well, as I always say, a good fellow so long as he doesn't matriculate at Princeton."

Harlot held up his glass. We would drink to that. One knew he merriment of drinking to the health of Annapurna as used to Nanda Devi. Then we shook hands and drove back to Keep. In the morning, Harlot left. He would drop me a word on a point of advice from time to time, but I was not to be in the same room with him again for several years.

Start

HOBBARD AT YALE

The rock climbing left its inheritance. In my senior year at St. Matthew's, I went from second shell to first on the crew and rowed against St. Paul's and Groton. I passed my Entrance Boards with good marks and one full leap of my now domiciled dyslexia. I won the one fistfight I had three years at prep school. I even worked out at wrestling

150-pound
passed
ahead
in my

→ which was difficult for me since I was still expunging from my brain every trace of the glom-job by the assistant chaplain (who always nodded when we passed). My loins no longer felt impacted with pus. And I did get into Yale. I had had, as one would suspect, a sense of future mission all through my last year at St. Matthew's and it continued in college. I entered Yale with the full expectation that some official at one of the freshman inquiry desks would lead me over to my undergraduate CIA unit, but as I soon learned, the Agency did not go in for college cells. No raps sounded on my door at midnight.

At Harlot's suggestion, I did join ROTC. "You'll be dealing with idiots," he told me, "but there are requirements for military service that have to be satisfied before you can join the Agency, and ROTC takes care of that. After Yale, you certainly wouldn't want to face two years in the armed services before coming to us."

I did close-order drill over the next eight semesters and managed to get good enough to air out any dank memories of left-foot-club-foot with the Knickerbocker Grays. I discovered a vein of optimism in myself. As one grew older, the traumatic impasses of childhood could actually dissolve.

Harlot would telephone from time to time and prove interested in which courses I chose. Usually it was to push my interests toward English. "Learn your mother tongue and you'll appreciate the others." Before sophomore year he sent me what he saw as a great gift, a first edition of Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, and truth, it wasn't bad. There was a time when I could not only locate the roots of a word in Latin and Greek, but enjoy the exotic yams and tubers that come to us from Scandinavian and Celtic. I learned of English words derived from Italian by way of Latin, as well as of Portuguese from Latin (*auto-da-fé* and *binnacle*), and French out of Portuguese from Latin (*fetich* and *parasol*), and French out of Spanish from Latin, and Portuguese out of Spanish and Dutch derived from Latin (*cant* and *canal* and *pink*), and German from Latin, and French from Late Latin, and German out of Hungarian from Serbian from late Greek from Latin, all to be tapped for *hussar*. I learned crossbreeds of French out of Spanish from Arabic from Greek—*alembic* is one reward—and I will not go on

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at length about English that came to us from Low German, Dutch, Slavonic, Russian, Sanskrit, Magyar, Hebrew, Hindustani. Harlot, by his lights, was getting me ready for CIA. The theory? Why, look to the tendrils of other tongues that had grown their way into English. Thereby one might develop a taste for the unspoken logic of other lands.

Of course, I saw it all as preparation. For the next four years, my courses and the friends I made, were all there to contribute to my mission as a CIA man. If I had any conflict over my future occupation, it was on spring nights in New Haven, after an occasional and frustrating date with a girl, when I would tell myself that I really wished to become a novelist. Brooding upon this, I would also inform myself that I did not have sufficient experience to write. Joining CIA would give me the adventures requisite to working up good fiction.

I was certainly single-minded. I see myself in junior year before the Yale-Harvard game, drunk at Mory's with my peers, holding the silver bowl high. I was obliged to keep drinking Green Cup for as long as my table would continue to sing, yes, how I drank and how they chose to sing. The song was long, and I would not quit until the last bar of music was sung, and sung again.

Words I have not thought of in thirty years come to me out of the pale, sunlike glare of the interior of that large silver punch bowl. I quaffed Green Cup at Mory's and around me in a ring of ten illuminated voices, the song cried on:

It's Harry, it's H, it's H makes the world go round.
It's Harry, H, that makes the world go round.
Sing Hallelujah, sing Hallelujah,
Put a nickel on the drum,
Save another drunken bum,
Sing Hallelujah, sing Hallelujah,
Put a nickel on the drum,
Save another drunken bum,
Put a nickel on the drum,
And you'll be saved.

They paused for breath but I had to keep drinking.

Oooh, I'm H-A-P-P-Y to be F-R-double-E,
 F-R-double-E to be S-A-V-E-D,
 S-A-V-E-D from the bonds of S-I-N,
 Glory, glory Hallelujah,
 Hip, Hooray, Amen.

And I, drinking that sweet, potent, noxious, liquor-hallowed Green Cup, swallow into swallow, giving my soul to finish the bowl, knew that angels watched me as I drank, and if I drank it all before the song was done, we would beat Harvard tomorrow, we would serve our team from the stands. We would be there to offer our devotion, our love, our manly ability to booze with the gods at Mory's. Only gods drank to the depths of a silver bowl. We would ring Yale Bowl with the might of our mission at Yale, which was to defeat Harvard tomorrow. God, didn't I guzzle it down, and the score next day, in that November of 1953, was Yale 0, Harvard 13.

5 | I was introduced to Kittredge toward the end of junior year at Yale. Just before Easter vacation, a summons came by telegram: COME MEET MY FIANCEE HADLEY KITTREDGE GARDINER. SPEND EASTER AT THE KEEP WITH KITTREDGE AND JEAN HARLOW.

Back to Doane. I had not been to the island since my father, in need of the money a couple of years ago, had pushed and cajoled his two brothers and single sister into agreement on the sale. Why his funds needed replenishment remained one more family mystery. Among the Hubbards, windfalls, disasters, and outright speculation were kept at a greater distance from the children than sexual disclosure; all we knew (and it was talked

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AFM 228-249

FOURTH ADVERTISEMENT FOR MYSELF: THE LAST DRAFT OF THE DEER PARK

In his review of The Deer Park, Malcolm Cowley said it must have been a more difficult book to write than The Naked and The Dead. He was right. Most of the time, I worked on The Deer Park in a low mood; my liver, which had gone bad in the Philippines, exacted a hard price for forcing the effort against the tide of a long depression, and matters were not improved when nobody at Rinehart & Co. liked the first draft of the novel. The second draft, which to me was the finished book, also gave little enthusiasm to the editors, and open woe to Stanley Rinehart, the publisher. I was impatient to leave for Mexico, now that I was done, but before I could go, Rinehart asked for a week in which to decide whether he wanted to do the book. Since he had already given me a contract which allowed him no option not to accept the novel (a common arrangement for writers whose sales are more or less large) any decision to reject the manuscript would cost him a sizable advance. (I learned later he had been hoping his lawyers would find the book obscene, but they did not, at least not then in May 1954.) So he had really no choice but to agree to put the book out in February, and gloomily he consented. To cheer him a bit, I agreed to his request that he delay paying me my advance until publication, although the first half was due on delivery of the manuscript. I thought the favor might improve our relations.

Now, if a few of you are wondering why I did not take my book back and go to another publishing house, the answer is that I was tired, I was badly tired. Only a few weeks before, a doctor had given me tests for the liver, and it had shown itself to be sick and depleted. I was hoping that a few months in Mexico would give me a chance to fill up again.

But the next months were not cheerful. The Deer Park had been done as well as I could do it, yet I thought it was probably a