

(170) 1066-1073
POISONING CASTR

~~ANCHOVY-RED; you are ANCHOVY-GREEN; I am ANCHOVY BLUE, and Rasputin is ANCHOVY-GRAY. You'll be meeting soon with a gentleman whom Classy Bob used to employ. Johnny Ralston. He will be ANCHOVY-WHITE."~~

~~"And what about?"—I did not know how to describe him. Of course, we were secure on *seek*, but given the manners of the moment, I did not want to use his name—"what about Touch-Football?"~~

~~"Yes, call him that. Good. Touch-Football. He doesn't really want to know. Just keeps exhorting everyone to bring in results, but don't bring his nose into contact with his mind."~~

~~"Yessir."~~

~~"You will accompany ANCHOVY-RED everywhere on this venture. Doesn't matter whether he likes it or not."~~

~~"Will he call on me every time?"~~

~~"He will if he doesn't want any uncomfortable moments with me."~~

~~On that, Harlot hung up.~~

~~I would not have long to wait. Harvey, I knew, was at Zenith today. My phone soon rang. "Have you had lunch?" he asked.~~

~~"Not yet."~~

~~"Well, you are going to miss it. Meet me in the car pool."~~

~~His Cadillac was waiting, motor running, and I reached the vehicle just enough in advance to open the door for him. He grunted and signaled to me to get in first and slide over. While we rode, he did not speak, and the bad mood that came off the bulk of his presence was as palpable as body odor.~~

~~Only when we were on the Rickenbacker Causeway to Miami Beach did he speak. "We are going to see a guy named Ralston. You know who he is?"~~

~~"Yes."~~

~~"All right. When we get there, keep your mouth shut. I will do the talking. Is that clear?"~~

~~"Yessir."~~

~~"You are not equipped for this job. As you probably know, you have been handed to me. In my opinion, it is a mistake."~~

~~"I'll try to make you change your mind."~~

~~He belched. "Just pass me that jug of martinis, will you?" Along Collins Avenue in Miami Beach, he spoke again.~~

START

Bill Haney's

"Not only will you keep your mouth shut, but you will not take your eyes off this greaseball, Johnny Ralston. Keep looking at him as if he's a piece of shit and you will wipe him if he moves. Keep thinking that you are capable of splashing acid in his eyes. Don't speak or he'll know it's nothing but cold piss."

"The picture is clear by now," I said.

"Nothing personal. I just don't think you have the makings for this mode of procedure."

Roselli was living in a brand-new houseboat moored on Indian Creek, across Collins Avenue from the Fontainebleau. Lashed next to it was a spanking new thirty-foot power cruiser with a flying bridge. A slim, well-tanned, sharp-featured man about fifty with elegantly combed silver hair was sitting on the deck of the houseboat, and he stood up when he saw the Cadillac come to a stop. Dressed in a white shirt and white slacks, he was barefoot. "Welcome," he said. I noticed that the houseboat was named *Lazy Girl II*, and the power cruiser moored to it, *Streaks III*.

"Can we move out of the sun?" asked Harvey as he came on board.

"Come inside, Mr. O'Brien."

The living room of the houseboat was more than thirty feet long and was decorated in flesh tones like a suite at the Fontainebleau. Puffed-up furniture full of curves undulated along a wall-to-wall carpet. Sitting at a white baby grand piano, with their backs to the keys, were two girls in pink and orange halters, yellow skirts, and white high-heeled shoes. They were blond and suntanned and had baby faces and full lips. Their near-white lipstick gave off a moon-glow as if to say that they were capable of kissing all of you and might not mind since this was exactly what they were good at.

"Meet Terry and Jo-Ann," said Roselli.

"Girls," said Harvey, speaking precisely between recognition and dismissal.

As if by prior agreement, the girls did not look at me; I did not smile at them. I felt that I was going to be surprisingly good at not saying a word. I was still seething, after all, from my boss's evaluation of me.

Harvey gave a small inclination of his chin in the direction of Terry and Jo-Ann.

"Girls," said Roselli, "go up on deck and get some more tan for yourselves, will you?"

The moment they were gone, Harvey lowered himself distrustfully to the edge of one of the large round armchairs, and from his attaché case withdrew a small black box. He switched it on and said, "Let me open our discussion by telling you that I am not here to fart around."

"Totally comprehended," said Roselli.

"If you are wired," said Harvey, "you might as well take it off and get comfortable. If you are operating any installed recording equipment, you are wasting tape. This black box scrambles all reception."

As if in assent, a small unpleasant electronic hum came up from the equipment.

"Now," said Harvey, "I don't care who you dealt with before on this matter, you will at present deal with me and no one else."

"Agreed."

"You agree too quickly. I have a number of questions. If you don't answer them to my satisfaction, I will cut you off the project. If you make noise, I can throw you to the wolves."

"Listen, Mr. O'Brien, do not issue threats. What can you do, kill me? As far as I am concerned, I have visited that place already." He nodded to certify these words and added, "Drinks?"

"Not on duty," said Harvey, "no, thank you. I will repeat: We know why you are in this. You entered the U.S. illegally when you were eight years old and your name was Filippo Sacco. Now you want a citizenship."

"I ought to have one," said Roselli. "I love this country. There are millions of people with citizenship who despise this country, but I, who don't have my passport, love it. I am a patriot."

"There is," said Harvey, "no room to double-cross me, or the people I represent. If you try any tricks, I can have you deported."

"You do not need to talk like a hard-on."

"Would you rather," asked Harvey, "have me say behind your back that I am holding you by the short hairs?"

Roselli laughed. He was all by himself in this merriment but he kept it going for a while.

"I guess, Mr. O'Brien," he said, "you are one total example of a prick."

"Wait until I show you the warts and the welts."

"Have a drink," said Roselli.

"Martini. Scotch over the cubes, spill it out, then lay in the gin."

"And you, sir," said Roselli to me, "what would you like?"

I looked at him and did not reply. It was more difficult than I had expected not to offer small courtesies to people I did not know. Besides, I wanted a drink. Roselli shrugged, got up and went to the bar near the white baby grand piano. Harvey and I sat in silence.

Roselli handed Harvey his martini. He had also mixed a bourbon on the rocks for himself and a Scotch for me which he made a point of setting down on an end table next to my chair, a deft move for Roselli, I decided, since a bit of my attention kept returning to the drink.

"Let's address the positive side of the question," said Roselli. "What if I bring this off? What if the big guy—"

"Rasputin."

"What if he gets hit?"

"In that case," said Harvey, "you get your citizenship approved."

"To success," said Roselli, lifting his drink.

"Now, answer my questions," said Harvey.

"Shoot."

"How did you get into this project in the first place?"

"Classy Bob came to me."

"Why?"

"We know each other."

"What did you do?"

"I went to Sam."

"Why?"

"Because I needed to get to the Saint."

"Why?"

"You know."

"Don't worry about what I know. Answer my questions."

"The Saint is the only man who knows enough Cubans to select the guy who is right for the job."

"What did Sam do?"

"Besides fuck everything up?" asked Roselli.

"Yes."

"He dabbled. He picked a few people. He didn't break a sweat."

"He did, however, get Classy Bob in trouble with the Bureau."

"You are the one who said that."

"You are the one," said Harvey, "who said Sammy fucked everything up."

"I don't know what he did. But I thought we were set to go. Rasputin was supposed to be off the board before the election. Nixon for President. So I ask one question: Did Sam jam the gears?"

"We are referring to October 31 of last year in Las Vegas."

"Yes."

"Sam did it, you say?"

"I," said Roselli, "would rather avoid what I cannot prove."

"Sam," Harvey said, "is bragging that he has worked with some of my associates."

"For a guy with a closed mouth, Sam can open it," said Roselli.

"Why?"

"Vanity."

"Explain that," said Harvey.

"When Sam started out, he was just one more ugly little guy with an ugly little wife. Now, he goes around saying, 'We Italians are the greatest lovers in the world. We can out-do any nigger on his best day. Look at the evidence,' says Sam."

"Who does he say this to?"

"The dummies around him. But word gets out. He brags too much. Vanity. He says, 'Look at the evidence. Two world leaders. Kennedy and Castro.' " Here Roselli stopped. "Forgive me. You mind if I use the names?"

"It's secure," said Harvey, "use them."

"All right," said Roselli, "two guineas like Sammy G. and Frank Fiorini are fucking Kennedy and Castro's broads. Modene may screw Kennedy but she comes back to Sammy, says Sammy, for the real stuff. I would say he has an excessively exaggerated idea of himself. When I first knew Sam G. he used to wear white socks and black shoes, and the white socks was always falling down. That's what a meatball he used to be."

"Thank you," said Harvey, "you are giving me a clear picture."

"Sam is a big man in the States," said Roselli, "Chicago, Miami, Vegas, L.A.—don't mess with him. Cuba, no. He needs the Saint for Cuba."

"And Maheu?"

"His loyalty is to Howard Hughes."

"Is Hughes interested in Havana?"

"Who isn't? Havana will put Las Vegas back in the desert again."

"This collates," said Harvey. "You are not to deal any longer with Bob and Sammy. Consider them untrustworthy and surplus."

"I hear you. I concur."

"Down the hatch," said Harvey. He held out his martini glass for a refill, and after one good gulp, added: "Let's look at the situation with Santos."

"He is the menu," said Roselli.

"Horseshit," said Harvey. "Trafficante works with us, he works with Castro. How are you to trust him?"

"The Saint works with a lot of people. He used to work with Batista. He is close to some of the Batista people today, Masferrer and Kohly. The Saint has friends in Inter-Pen, in MIRR, Alpha 60, DRE, 30th of November, MDC and CFC. I can name a lot of organizations. Around Miami, half the exiles is taking hits on the other half, but the Saint is friends with all. He is friends with Prio Socarras and Carlos Marcello in New Orleans—a very big friendship—and Sergio Arcacha Smith. With Tony Varona and with Toto Barbaro. With Frank Fiorini. He is friends with Jimmy Hoffa and some of the big oil money in Texas. Why shouldn't he be friends with Castro? Why shouldn't he be friends with you? He will tell Castro what he wants to tell him;

he will tell you as much as he feels like telling you. He will do a job for you and do it right, he will do a job for Castro and do it right. His real loyalty—"

"Yes," said Harvey, "the real loyalty?"

"To the holdings in Havana."

"What about Meyer?"

"Santos is also friends with Meyer. He don't worry about Meyer. If Castro goes, Santos will be holding the casinos. That is bigger than being Lansky or Jimmy Hoffa. Santos could become number-one in the mob. That is equal to being the number-two man in America. Right under the President."

"Who taught you to count?" asked Harvey.

"It's a matter of debate. Give me that much."

"If I was Santos," said Harvey, "I would put in with Castro. Santos is there. He can give me the casinos."

"Yes, but then you got to run them for Castro."

"A point," said Harvey.

"Castro will never give the casinos back," said Roselli. "He is keeping them closed. He is a puritan right up the ass. I know Santos. He will come along with us to get Castro."

"Well, I have my hesitations," said Harvey. "There is a little prick with fire coming out of his ears named Bobby Kennedy. He does not cut a deal. Sammy may have helped to bring in Illinois for Jack Kennedy, but the FBI is persecuting Sammy right now. Santos can read that kind of handwriting."

"Santos will take his chances. Once Castro is dead, Santos has a lot of cards to play."

A silence came over both men. "All right," said Harvey, at last, "what are the means?"

"No guns," said Roselli.

"They do the job."

"Yeah," said Roselli, "but the guy who makes the hit would like to live."

"I can get you a high-powered rifle, equipped with a silencer, and accurate at five hundred yards."

Roselli shook his head. "Santos wants pills."

"Pills," said Harvey, "have too many links. Castro has always been tipped off."

"Pills. We need delivery next week."

It was Harvey's turn to shrug. "We will produce the product on date specified."

They spent the next few minutes talking about a shipment of weapons for an exile group that Trafficante wanted to supply.

"I will deliver the ordnance myself," said Harvey.

He stood up, packed away the scrambler, and shook hands with Roselli.

"I'd like you," said Harvey, "to answer another question for me."

"Sure," said Roselli.

"Are you any relation to Sacco of Sacco and Vanzetti?"

"Never heard of the cocksucker," Roselli said.

11 | The conscientious effort to look at Roselli as if he were something to wipe off the wall, had left me as tired as an artist's model who has been posing in one position for too long. Harvey, who may have been equally tired, did not speak on the ride back, but merely kept filling his glass from the jug of martinis.

As we were getting out of his Cadillac, he said, "When you report to his lordship, tell him to clear Trafficante with Helms. It's rotten meat all the way, and I am not sitting down to this meal alone."

I sent a six-page description to LINE/GHOUL—SPECIAL SHUNT of what had transpired, but all the while that I was writing to Harlot, I found myself debating whether to tell Kit-tredge as well.

I decided not to. Some material was too privileged. On the

Three Sisters
and
a Brace of Cops

1960-1962

(FROM: MARILYN)

(678)

MARILYN and MILLER
SECOND ACT

1973

Start 2

1959-1962

~~Marilyn - 2nd Act~~
~~of~~
~~The~~
~~Princess~~

Y^e they cannot get free of entanglements. One may as well suppose a law: if the past is full of old complications, the future will grow new ones. They need money. So she is obliged to do another movie before *The Misfits*, and then complications in Gable's schedule force her to begin another. By the time she will finish *Some Like It Hot*, their marriage is in jeopardy; by the end of *Let's Make Love*, they are obliged to hang together like addicts.

What dismantling of hopes! She had believed he would open the life of the mind to her, and came to suspect that her own mind was more interesting than his. "You're like a little boy," says Maggie, "you don't see the knives people hide." Of course, if her unvoiced resentment of him is, after all this, secretly sexual, then who can not think she might have known better? At no time, certainly, will she live so much on sleeping pills as in her years with Miller, and an insight into the distance between their bodies comes from a story Miller tells of one miserable day when he discovers that the inside of her mouth is covered with open sores. Investigation of the medicine cabinet discloses another horror: she has several dozen bottles of sedatives of all variety; he introduces the cache to a chemist, who informs Miller that the reactions of some pills upon others can be literally poisonous. She is lucky to have gotten away with no more than a sore mouth. Poor pill-taking child. Her chemistry is on this occasion cleared up, that is, Miller succeeds in narrowing her addiction to a few compatible barbiturates, but what a misery of marriage is suggested if he "discovers" her mouth is sore. Is it a week, two weeks, or a month since they have shared a kiss? The episode takes place in Los Angeles and prob-

ably occurs in the period just before *Let's Make Love*, when their marriage is again at its worst. But then they are never well suited for one another when she works. We have to attempt to penetrate into her condition at such times. As she begins *Some Like It Hot*, she appears as a monster of will. She is also a fragile shell. If we know her well enough to suspect fragility is her cruellest weapon, and she cannot possibly be as weak as she pretends, in fact we are witness to a debased portion of her strength, still she is in the unendurable position of protecting an exquisite sensitivity which has been pricked, tickled, twisted, squashed and tortured for nearly all of her life. The amount of animal rage in her by these years of her artistic prominence is almost impossible to control by human or chemical means. Yet she has to surmount such tension in order to present herself to the world as that figure of immaculate tenderness, utter bewilderment, and goofy dipsomaniacal sweetness which is Sugar Kane in *Some Like It Hot*. It will yet be her greatest creation and her greatest film. She will take an improbable farce and somehow offer some indefinable sense of promise to every absurd logic in the dumb scheme of things until the movie becomes that rarest of modern art objects, an *affirmation*—the audience is more attracted to the idea of life by the end of two hours. For all of Wilder's skill, and the director may never have been better, for all of first-rate performances by Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon, and an exhibition of late-mastery by Joe E. Brown, it would have been no more than a very funny film, no more, and gone from the mind so soon as one stepped out of the lobby, if not for Monroe. She brought so good and rare an evocation it seemed to fit into the very disposition of things, much as if God—having put a



few just men on earth in order to hold the universe together—was now also binding the cosmos with a few dim-witted angels as well.

Talking about acting in her last *Life* interview, she says at one point, "You're trying to find the nailhead, not just strike a blow." But what a journey down each day, down to the nailhead. What old emotional mine fields to pass through as she navigates by stimulants out of her chemical stupor into her consciousness. And what bile she must dispense, what poison to her tricks. On the set of *Some Like It Hot* she will drive fellow actors into horrors of repetition. Through forty-two takes, Tony Curtis has to nibble on forty-two chicken legs because Monroe keeps blowing her lines. Repetition kills the soul—Curtis will not touch chicken for many a month. Jack Lemmon and he will stand around in high heels and breast padding, in silk stockings and false hips, for all of a long day's shooting all the while Marilyn is unable to say, "It's me, Sugar." "There were forty-seven takes," as Wilder describes it. "After take thirty, I had the line put on a blackboard. She would say things like, 'It's Sugar, me.'"

Maybe she is searching into nuances of identity. "It's Sugar—the name you know me by, which by my own reference is—me." Splendid. She is working out a problem in psychic knots worthy of R. D. Laing. But actors are going mad. When she cannot remember one line, "Where is the bourbon?" as she goes searching through a chest, Wilder finally pastes the line on the inside of the drawer: WHERE IS THE BOURBON? Soon he is pasting the line on every drawer. If she is trying to hit the nail on the head, and get down into that core of herself where the nail meets the nerve, she is also voiding her near to infinite anger at life, men, and the movie-working world.

How she exhausts the talents around her. "When I come to cut the film," Wilder says, "I look at the early takes. Curtis looks good on those and Monroe is weak. On the later takes, she is wonderful and he is weak. As a director, I must disregard his best takes . . . and go with Monroe . . . because when Monroe is on the screen, the audience cannot keep their eyes off her."

"Yes," Curtis will tell Paula Strasberg when she weeps after he has said kissing Marilyn is "like kissing Hitler," yes, he will say, "You try acting with her, Paula, and see how you feel." She will be hours late to the set. On a good day she is two hours late; on a bad day, six. The slightest suggestion by Wilder on how to do a scene puts her in a state. She must do it her own way, and once again we learn later that her instinct is right, but she chooses to do it her own way by walking off from him to consult with Paula Strasberg. Shades of Sir Laurence and Ms Monroe. She is ten years ahead of her time.

Of course, she knows what she protects, knows film is not life or the stage but exists somewhere else. In film, to quote from an essay on *Maidstone*, the actor can

disobey the director or appear incapable of reacting to his direction, leave the other actors isolated from him and with nothing to react to, he can even get his lines wrong, but if he has film technique, he will look sensational in the rushes, he will bring life to the scene even if he was death on the set. It is not surprising. There is something sinister about film. *Film is a phenomenon whose resemblance to death has been ignored too long.*

And we can wonder at the depth to which she must return each day to be again in contact with Sugar Kane; we can think again of grandmother

Della and the hour in which she may have tried to strangle the year-old child. With what, we can wonder, does Monroe finally make contact?

Is it with some last piece of her own exacerbated nerves, or some place she hovers not alive nor dead and spoiled forever for sleep? Now she spoils the air in which she works. Wilder completes the film in near to total agony. His back is in such misery of muscle spasms that he cannot go to bed at night but instead must try to sleep in a chair.

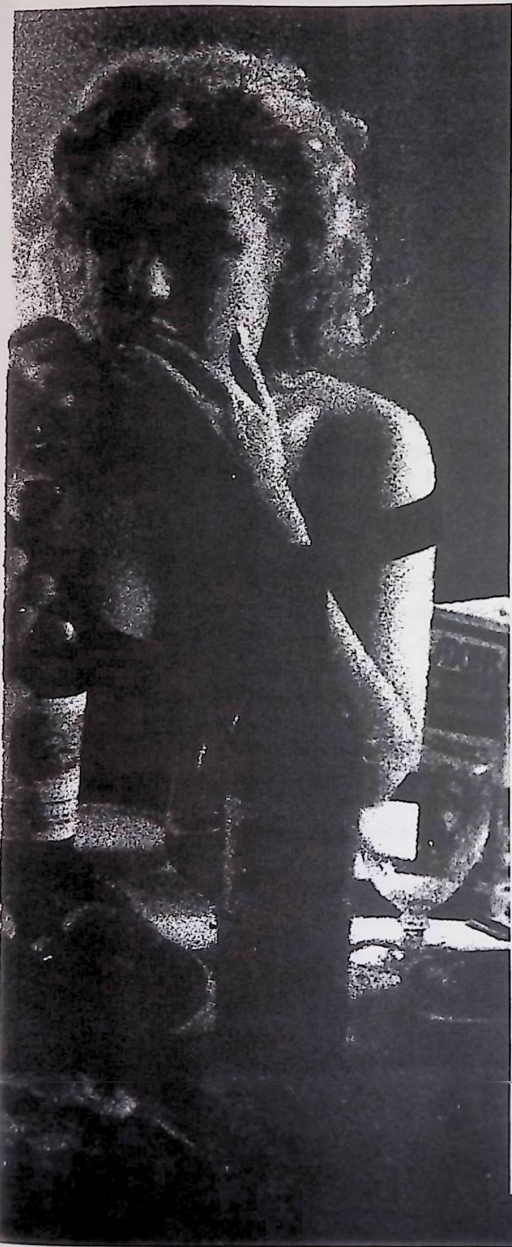
She will respond by failing to inquire about the state of his back. Since she has an interest in the film, she thinks it is a trick to make her fear the financial consequences if he cannot continue. But then she trusts no director alive. Even Logan in *Bus Stop* has cut out what she feels were her best moments. If she cannot forgive Logan, she will not be light on Wilder. Yet as if to demonstrate that any inability to remember lines is of her own choosing, she will also go through long scenes without an error. Weeks after it is over, Wilder will tell an interviewer he can eat again, sleep again, enjoy life, and finally be able to "look at my wife without wanting to hit her because she is a woman."

It is comic by then, but not very, for Marilyn will see the interview back in New York and excite Miller to send a telegram to inform the director that Marilyn Monroe "is the salt of the earth." Wilder sends his reply: "The salt of the earth told an assistant director to go fuck himself." Soon it is not at all comic. She has discovered she is "pregnant" during *Some Like It Hot*, and her time away from the set has been spent resting in bed. She even takes an ambulance from her hotel to the airport in order not to be jostled on the ride, but the fetus—tubular again? hysteri-

cal?—is lost, something in her body or mind is lost by her third month, lost around this time of exchange between Miller and Wilder, and the month of November passes in deep depression which lingers through the winter. Of course, it is her nature to rally. *Some Like It Hot* opens to her best reviews. She has never looked better at a premiere. Then she receives the David DiDonatello Award for *The Prince and the Showgirl*, and that is at least a small consolation to substitute for that Academy Award for which she has never even been nominated. In June of 1959, she goes into Lenox Hill Hospital for "corrective surgery." She is still trying to have a child. Guiles reports without substantiation that "a permanent strain had come between her and Miller before the summer advanced very far," but we can assume, since Guiles is careful in his statements, that Miller, or Frank Taylor (who commissioned Guiles' book) may have said as much, although not for quotation.

Then there is small record of activity in the fall of 1959. Presumably, Miller is polishing *The Misfits*. In February, they put up at the Beverly Hills Hotel while she gets ready to do *Let's Make Love* as another part of her four-film contract with Fox. The script is by Norman Krasna, who some eight years before first suggested to Jerry Wald that they expose her nude calendar in order to publicize *Clash by Night*. Small surprise if Wald is the producer of *Let's Make Love*.

Studying the script, there is trouble. She knows the film will not play as well as it reads. It is a fair expression of Twentieth Century-Fox's comprehension of her film art. Since the new contract was signed, she has made *Bus Stop*, *The Prince and the Showgirl*, and *Some Like It Hot*, and she could also have done *Nana*, *The Brothers Kar-*



amazon, *Anna Christie*, or *Rain* to much profit, but they give her *Let's Make Love*. Her role is as empty as the memory of an old Zanuck film. So she encourages Miller to build up the part. Once again her talented playwright goes into the lists, tries to add funny dialogue to a film that is not funny. Gregory Peck, supposed to play the male lead, discovers that his part diminishes as hers increases; he resigns the job. It is time for her to walk off as well, but it is possible she would rather work in anything at this point than spend time with Miller in Connecticut or New York. Besides, they still need the money. And then, Yves Montand and Simone Signoret are living across the hall at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Marilyn, who has been in profound depression for months and so deep on sleeping pills (which Miller doles out to her each night) that her eyes will now be incorrigibly bloodshot on color film, comes out of her most terrible moods whenever the Montands are with them. She loves Simone and announces to the press that Yves in his turn . . . but let us give the quote: "Next to my husband and along with Marlon Brando, I think Yves Montand is the most attractive man I've ever met." Miller is next in admiration for Yves. "He and Marilyn are both very vital people. They possess internal engines which emit indescribable rays of energy." Montand, in fact, is part of the perfect prescription for Miller's noble worker, since he comes from peasant stock in Italy, and his father has been a political activist who hated Mussolini enough to emigrate to Marseilles and work on the docks. Montand, who left school in the sixth grade, has worked in his turn since he was eleven. Such details have to rouse Miller. Besides, Montand has played in the Paris production of *The Crucible*. Now Arthur recommends him

to replace Gregory Peck.

The ante is up. Montand has been successful in French films. He is a theatrical star of respectable measure on Broadway, where he has done a one-man show—songs, monologues, dances. On the other hand, he is hardly an international household name, no Burton, Chevalier, and certainly no Sinatra, although we can assume he is as ambitious as any Italian peasant with strength and wit who has been working from the age of eleven and been transplanted twice.

Marilyn Monroe is his best ticket to notoriety since she has been famously faithful to Miller for the three-and-a-half-year run of their marriage. Of course, Miller has had to pay an increasing price—each year she speaks more rudely to him in public. In private we can take a fair idea of how she scourges him from *After the Fall*.

"All you care about is money! Don't shit me!" Maggie tells Quentin.

Two breaths later she will let him know his pants are too tight. "Fags wear pants like that. They attract each other with their asses."

"You calling me a fag now?"

"Just I've known fags and some of them didn't even know themselves . . ." Marilyn is beginning to sound like many another drunken blonde. She is also throwing herself at Montand.

Yet, Miller is grateful. He notes that Marilyn's temper seems to be kept in balance when Yves and Simone are about. "Anyone who could make her smile came as a blessing to me," he was to say later. It is the remark to etch the final lines of marital misery.

Any affair to come seems designed by the gods of purified plot. Signoret is abruptly called back to France for her next film. Worried about the security of her marriage, she induces a friend,

Doris Vidor, to look after Montand while she is gone, but in her first conversation with Simone's mate, Mrs. Vidor is told by Yves in all anxiety that Miller is also leaving Los Angeles to see his children in the East. Montand will be left alone with Monroe. "What am I going to do?" he asks. "I'm a vulnerable man." Witness his feelings: "I can't alienate her because I'm dependent upon her good will, and I want to work with her. . . . I'm really in a spot." It is black market talk. Whether he knows it or not, he is trapped in a process not unlike the calendar nude. Publicity for *Let's Make Love* (which will need it) is going to be obliged to let the world in on the latest hottest name wave in Hollywood, Montand Monroe. Montand is *vulnerable*. He has been the first to declare it. He can be found open to stimulus. He can read reactions. Montand Monroe increases each day.

As if in revenge on Miller, Marilyn is docile with Yves. If they are asked to be on time at a party, Montand assures the host, "She'll be anywhere I say on time." He is right. To friends he brags, "She's got so she'll do whatever I ask her to do on the set. Everyone is amazed at her cooperation, and she's constantly looking to me for approval." That is also true. She has never made a movie where she is so agreeable to the director. She has also never made a movie where she is so ordinary. A sad truth is before us again. Art and sex are no more compatible than they care to be. She is wan in the film and dull. Hollywood looks at *Let's Make Love*. Hollywood offers the verdict: "Fucked-out." Ergo, Twentieth increases all publicity on Montand Monroe. If the film is flat, the love affair must show up at least in the final heats of the year.

All final heats come however to an abrupt ter-

mination with the end of the film. The picture has been delayed by an actors' strike and so she is obliged to leave for New York and three days of costume fitting for *The Misfits* without even a day's rest.

In Reno, Miller is waiting for her. What horrors of the sleeping pill to take up again. Ejected from a love affair of two months' duration (which may or may not be the love of her life—not to mention that she adores Signoret the wife) she is now in the 110-degree July heat of Reno with the remains of an ice-cold marriage: on hand is that husband she will never forgive for giving her away. They are there to stay together to make the film, but she does not know by whom she has been used the most, nor what is the curious state of her womb, awakened again, then left to molder. She is ill as she has never been ill before. Her blessing is that the film will not be made in color and so won't show every wash of bloodshot in the lost white of her eyes.

The world comes to watch the filming. Before they are done, there will be hundreds of press. The word is out. Frank Taylor, the producer, has said to *Time*: "This is an attempt at the ultimate motion picture. . . . Not only the first original screenplay by a major American writer but the best screenplay I have ever read, and we have the best director, John Huston, for it." In turn, Clark Gable thinks it will be the best role he has ever had, and is right if everything else he has done, including Rhett Butler, has suggested a manner rather than a man. It has been perhaps the most successful manner in

the history of cinema, but no one has ever seen the actor. Since he has a bad heart and can die in any season of any year, the film is no ordinary venture to him. Nor can it be to Montgomery Clift, who has often been considered the most talented actor in Hollywood but has not had a picture in years to measure this talent. As for Marilyn, she has never had anything written directly for her before. The picture, as we will see, must become nothing less than her canonization. In his turn, Miller has committed everything. He has not had a new play in half a decade, and has written only a few short magazine pieces since their marriage, of which one, published in *Life*, has been nothing more nor less than tribute: "Her beauty shines because her spirit is forever showing itself." *The Misfits* has to be his justification. Five years of drought is next to the loss of limb for a writer.

Only the actors Eli Wallach and Thelma Ritter, ready as always to do their best work, and the director John Huston, are principals who do not find themselves laying their careers on the line. Huston is, of course, the only celebrated film artist to bear comparison to Hemingway. His life celebrates a style more important to him than film. His movies do not embody his life so much as they seem to emerge out of a pocket of his mind. He will take horses seriously and hunting, gambling, and serious drinking, he will be famous for a few of the most elaborate practical jokes in the well-documented Hollywood annals—by implication he does his picture work with disdain. It is as if film is an activity good men must not take upon themselves too solemnly. Yet he has made *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Asphalt Jungle*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Beat the Devil*, and *The African Queen*. During the mak-

ing of *The Misfits*, it is possible he will have no hour of greater absorption than the day on which he wins a camel race against Billy Pearson, the ex-jockey, or an occasion where he will take more aesthetic pleasure than at the birthday party for Eddie Parone, age thirty-five, assistant to the producer. There, Huston reads a poem he has written in celebration. Who would bet his life that Hemingway, incorrect spelling and all, could not have written it?

Eddie Perrone
sits all alone
Aug. 29 in sixty
Yesterday's score
was thirty four
Tonight one more wound
licks he.

Bind them up, Ed
Take heart, arise
lift up your bloody
head.

"Farewell" say you to Fauntle-
roy tie
And toy balloon & Esquimo Pie
And hurl this challenge
to the sky

"I Edward P
Remindeth thee
That I am infinitely I"

Huston has been living in Saint Clerans, County Galway, Ireland, where Miller has visited him, and they have had a fund of talk about the script over Irish whisky and a fire. Since Huston has a social life that thinks a great deal of horses and very little about intimate movie gossip, he has not heard too much of Marilyn's problem of getting

to the set on time; he has next to no idea of how sick she is. Miller will hardly tell him. Huston remembers Marilyn from *The Asphalt Jungle*, when she was somewhat unresponsive to direction, but then where is the film without an actor's quirks? On her first morning of shooting, however, which Huston has scheduled for ten o'clock rather than nine (out of deference to Miller's suggestion that she can use the sleep), he waits until eleven and there is no leading lady. His crew have their own relation to him. Incompetence is the hard stuff of mockery on a Huston set. As eleven o'clock strikes, so does the crew toll the hour. Miller, trying to camouflage the delay, looks to confer with Huston over the script.

It is a bad start, and in a few days word is out that Marilyn is taking a high count of Nembutals every night—the film promises to move as quickly as a wounded caterpillar. If Huston is furious, it is not in his style to give a sign. He has the contempt of a professional for the unprofessional. Since Miller and Monroe are obliged to make the film of their life in a state of nervous exhaustion, then that happens to be the way they have chosen to play their game and waste their psychic funds. He prefers to waste his substance in other fashion. (He will spend his nights losing a cumulative \$50,000 at the crap tables.) There is the unmistakable possibility that Huston withdraws subtly from the film, which is certainly not to say that he does not work hard, but that he refuses to become involved in any hysteria about making a great film. No, he will do his best to do a good job under the dry hot circumstances of the Reno desert in summer, and the final film has all the tone of a dry distaste for any excess of effort, emotion, or sentiment, as if every pipe of com-

munication in the world was already coated with emotional glop and it was time to clean the pipes. If people were to be moved by *The Misfits* it would be out of a paucity of tricks. The story would deliver what it was good enough to deliver, no more. That is an aesthetic. It is perhaps the most classical of the film aesthetics. But it is not the easiest way to make a major film. If Huston had a problem as a director, it was precisely that he could not come to take his work seriously enough to create a full resonance of atmosphere. Finally, it was as if there was something obscene about moviemaking, some rip-off of emotion that might spoil a finer tissue of subtleties not even to be described. Such as good horseflesh. Precisely because the script of *The Misfits* was so quiet in tone, it may have needed some commitment from the director to push the actors and crew beyond themselves. After one look, however, at Monroe's inability to give of herself in dependable fashion, Huston may have decided that all-out inspiration was going to be directly equal to a loss of face. Dignity for some artists has more worth than art. It is also possible Huston was bored by the miseries of Miller and Monroe. He had been through divorce, and could do without a good seat at this one.

The film settled upon a pattern. They shot with Monroe when available, shot away from her when not. With Miller, Huston worked closely. It was a script so delicate in the drift of its emotions and so taciturn in its story that the daily problem must have been to decide what motive they could offer the actors for a line. It was almost as if the story were too simple: a young divorcee, Roslyn Taber, begins to live in the desert outside Reno with a middle-aged cowboy, Gay Langland, played by Gable, while two other

cowboys, Eli Wallach and Monty Clift, begin to find her attractive, flirt with her, and apparently wait for her relation to Langland to end. After a time, the men go out to hunt for mustangs to trap and sell. It is one of the few ways left to earn a living that is "better than wages." Roslyn accompanies them, but is horrified at the cruelty of the capture and the pointless misery of the purpose. If these mustangs were once sold as riding horses for children, now they are canned as dogmeat. "A dog-eat-horse society," Huston will say in comment. So Monroe has a war with Gable which is resolved (1) by his capture of the last mustang as a gesture to himself, plus (2) setting the horse free as a gesture to her. The film ends in such gestures. They drive off together to face a world in which there will be fewer and fewer ways to make a living better than wages. There has been a curious shift in Miller's powers. Values are now vague.

While more can obviously be said in summary, the point is that *The Misfits* is a film, particularly in its first half, that will move on no more powerful hydraulic of plot than the suggestion of one nuance laid like a feather over another—so it is going to be closer to the nature of most emotional relations than other films. But its virtue is also its vulnerability. We see Roslyn and Langland come together, sleep together, set up home together, we feel the other two cowboys perching themselves on the edge of this relation, but no emotional facts are given, no setting of category or foundation, for the plot is never bolted down. We do not know exactly how Roslyn comes to feel for each man, nor how much she feels. The film is even less precise than biography. Unlike other movies we have no blueprint to the emotional line of her heart. Instead she seems to shim-

mer on the screen with many possibilities of reality. When she holds Monty Clift's head on her lap after he has been wounded in the rodeo, we do not know whether she is maternal, or stirring for him, or both—nor is she likely to know what she feels. In life, how would she?

So they are making a movie which is different in *tone* from other films, and she is altogether different from other actresses, even different from her performances of the past. She has no longer anything in common with Lorelei Lee. She is not sensual here but *sensuous*, and by a meaning of the word which can go to the root—she seems to possess no clear outline on screen. She is not so much a woman as a mood, a cloud of drifting senses in the form of Marilyn Monroe—no, never has she been more luminous.

On the other hand, never has Gable been more real. He could be leaning on the fence next door. Finally we have an idea of what Gable is really like. He is not bad! So, scene for scene, as the first rushes are slowly stitched together, it must have been obvious to Huston and Miller that they had a set of cameos which were superb in their understated taste. It was as if some hollow had been created where one could listen for the echo. But would these separate scenes come together into a movie that might work? Speaking of ultimate films, no black and white movie has ever had so high a budget before. So they might also be striking a blow for the economic future of good films to come. But how to know if what they were accomplishing was really good? That was like trying to calculate the final grandeur of a palace from two or three rooms. The question of guiding actors through this plotless plot had therefore to put its full demand upon the playwright and director. In the day-to-day uncertainty of

shooting, how were they to know whether an actor was ready with an emotion too rich or too poor, too strident or too vague? In turn, how could the actors know? The man who has become an actor to avoid that hungry hole of the mind which asks "Who am I?" now had to ask "Who are you?" of the role he was playing. It was even worse for Miller. In such a delicate shifting script, how could any scene be considered fixed, yet any change of dialogue in one scene might cause its uncalculated bend in another. Poor Miller! His head had to be overloaded with the most subtle literary equations while his life with Monroe was reduced to one livid state: hideous tension! If they had finally and most tragically arrived at the relation of cellmates who have learned over the years to detest each other into the pit of each intimate flaw, he was nonetheless obliged to work each day on scenes that extolled the beauty of her soul.

For Miller had written a lie in *The Misfits*. It was the half-lie that Marilyn was as lovely and vulnerable as Roslyn Taber, and that may have been all right in the beginning—a lie may be the only aesthetic structure available when working up a vehicle for a great movie star (because she can transmute the lie to magic), but Miller's problem was that he had to live in daily union with the lie, then refine it in his writing each night. Each night Monroe rubbed his nose in the other truth. If she had long been obliged when making a film to wrap herself in the psychic greatcoat of full hatred for some man, beginning with Don Murray in *Bus Stop*, then Olivier, then Wilder, and had discovered the cost of having no one to hate in *Let's Make Love*, Miller's suffering presence now became her real leading man. What must have doubled all hostility was that he was

there to remind her she had not been superb enough to rise out of the bile of the past. So if Miller was the man who had loved her most, he would now become the man who had to pay the most, and was condemned to be with her in three rooms on the top floor of the Hotel Mapes while traveling down the clock through Reno night after sleepless night. And if the wound of her infidelities with Montand was still glowing, it could only measure the contempt she offered to his heart. Miller suffered. He had the psychology of poverty where the mark of a man is to suffer and endure. So he suffered. And fed her sleeping pills and held them back, and walked the floor, and listened to her abuse, which many another ear in the hotel would also hear. ~~You can project through steel walls, honey,~~ and in the pause between each squall, flopped down for a space, or stared at the script on his desk. Guiles gives a description of the morning after "one such all-night vigil with Marilyn finally asleep while others were getting ready for the day." May Reis, their secretary, and Nan Taylor, the wife of the producer, enter the suite.

Miller was slumped in a heap on the sofa lapsing at moments into fits of trembling from nervous exhaustion. Nan Taylor . . . had heard that Marilyn had spent an especially bad night, but she was even more distressed to see what it had done to Miller. His hands half covering his face, Miller agonized over his situation. He confessed that he was obviously no help to Marilyn in seeing her through these terrible nights. He wondered if he shouldn't take a room in another hotel. "She needs care at night," he said, and then he seemed to defeat any hope of salvation by crying out, "But I care for her so much."

"I care for her so much." It is the bottomless cry of love. He is face to face with the most unendurable message of all: love by itself does not

conquer hatred. Nor does it heal another heart. It can only climb the walls of its own misery. For love without courage is an insult to those who hate. So he is taken care of in his pain by the two women. "Perhaps we can't solve Marilyn's problem this morning," Nan Taylor will say, "but we can do something about you," and leaves the room, sees someone in the hotel management, and comes back with a key to a spare room on the same floor where he can work and conceivably sleep.

Each day the picture falls further behind schedule. With Miller a little more removed from her scene, Marilyn begins to firm up future guidelines—she will live with a chosen entourage of technician-friends and social helpers. Paula is always there, and Marilyn can also count on her publicity man, her hair stylist, her makeup man Whitey Snyder, her driver, and Ralph Roberts, an actor big as a professional football player who has been her masseur for many months and will yet be her confidant and come to know her as well as anyone in the remaining two years of her life. She will soon be very sick and go through a crisis that almost ends her participation in the film, but for a few weeks it is almost as if she manages to continue by deriving some strength out of her hatred of Miller. She actually slams a car door in his face one day on location in the desert and tells her driver to leave him behind. (Miller will not share a car with her again.) And then there is the record of an evening when she sat and drank with Roberts and Agnes Flanagan, her

hair stylist, while watching brush fires on the horizon of the desert. Power lines have come down in this blaze, and Reno is in blackout. Since Miller's room has a separate generator to provide him illumination by which to write, she asks Roberts to get a little ice from a portable refrigerator in that room, and when Roberts returns—as Guiles reports the dialogue—Marilyn speaks of Miller in the following manner: “I can tell by your face,” she says to Roberts, “you saw old Grouchy Grumps. Did you speak to him? I mean did he say *hello*?”

He was lying on the sofa, Roberts tells her.

“He’ll go that way until he’s too exhausted to move,” she remarks without compassion. “From the desk to the sofa and back again.” She drops a cube in her glass. “Klunk!” she cries. “At least we got a little ice out of that room.” Boom! Next!

Is it possible she is brooding over Montand? A few days later she is in complete collapse. Suffering agonies from a particularly bad menstrual period, she arrives on location at noon with the temperature over 110 degrees, has to be helped out of the car, and, unable to coordinate by herself, is led over to the set. Metty, the cameraman, tells Huston it is hopeless. “Her eyes won’t focus.”

Huston shuts down. They have to gamble. She is flown to Los Angeles and put in a clinic where it is hoped she will be able to go on with the picture after ten days (by doctor’s estimate) of rest and “medication,” which is to say a new poison will perhaps be found to overcome a few effects of the old poison. At her first opportunity, she gets up, sneaks out of the hospital, and looks for Montand at the Beverly Hills Hotel, but he is neither there when she calls nor does he phone

back to answer her note. He merely tells friends in Hollywood that she has left a number where she can be reached. Soon a gossip columnist reports that Montand has told her how Marilyn has “a schoolgirl crush on him.” It creates bad publicity for Montand and he is obliged to explain himself in more detail: “I think she is an enchanting child and I would like to see her to say good-bye, but I won’t.” Then he adds, “She has been so kind to me, but she is a simple girl without any guile. Perhaps I was too tender and thought that maybe she was as sophisticated as some of the other ladies I have known. . . .” *Mon Dieu!* “Perhaps she had a schoolgirl crush. If she did, I’m sorry. But nothing will break up my marriage.”

Apparently she is not wounded crucially, for she will be in better condition when she comes back to the film. Perhaps she recognizes in the hospital that she can find a way to live without Miller and without marrying again. Perhaps she can even find a substitute for a mate by splicing the rope of her life with the short ends of lovers and friends. In any case, she returns to warm greetings, and for a busy week much is accomplished. Morale, for once, is good. (Huston has just won his camel race.) She does a five-minute non-stop scene with Monty Clift—the longest scene either actor or Huston has ever had to film, and is at her best in a number of crowded bar scenes at Dayton, Nevada. All this is accomplished in one productive week. Like most addicts, her energy is best when she is in transition from one state of drug-life to another, from addiction to abstention, or from abstention back to barbiturates again. It is only a constant state that seems certain to depress her.

In turn, Miller has apparently passed through his own kind of crisis. If their marriage is finally

severed, she, of course, will go out of her way to take a walk with him in Reno a night or two after she gets back. In the shooting that day he had delighted her by daring to show Monty Clift the kind of stiff-legged polka he wanted the actor to perform in a particular scene, Miller doing it with Marilyn before the crew. This species of artistic gallantry has touched her. They walk "like everyday people," as Marilyn will say to a reporter in all the bruised sorrow of an expiring marriage.

Of course, Miller is probably in better shape as a result of the separation. Isolation he can bear, and loss. It is the alternation of love and hate that wears him out. So as he withdraws from Marilyn his working relation to Huston intensifies. Miller may skirt the edge of a breakdown, but like some travelling ghost of an old prospector he manages to cross these desert lands of the West.

The film proceeds. It is weeks behind schedule and hundreds of thousands of dollars, more than a half million, over budget. (It will cost \$4,000,000 before it is done.) But that reckoning is later. Now the company begins to move out each day to a dry lake perhaps fifty miles from Reno where they will film the climax, a trapping of the wild horses. Now the fundamental conflict of the script, the movie company, the marriage, and even the direction of the picture comes into focus across the years—it is precisely so banal and awe-inspiring as the war between the men and the women, which here becomes the war between Marilyn and her director, her male company of co-stars, and her scriptwriter once a husband. She is at war with each of them to become the center of the film, and if we will conceive of her competitive instincts as equal to a great prizefighter's, we may begin to perceive how so much of the

film had to appear to her as a plot where she took on not one antagonist but many. ("You don't see the knives people hide.") Since her orgy of attention in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and her skill in stealing *How to Marry a Millionaire* from Betty Grable and Bacall, she has managed to get past *No Business Like Show Business* and *River of No Return* and gone on to be the center of every production since (except for *Let's Make Love*, which had no center), dominating directors and running away with each film. They have all, in varying degree, become *her* films. Few prizefighters could point to such a string of triumphs. But in *The Misfits* she is up against better opposition than she has ever faced, and it will affect her performance before the film is done. If she is more interesting and extraordinary in the first half of *The Misfits* than she has ever been before, she will yet find herself suffering many a new artistic uncertainty during the long weeks of shooting still to be done after that exciting week back from the hospital. With her suspiciousness of motive, how little can she trust Miller now that they are apart, or for that matter trust Huston with his lifelong absorption in male honor and male corruption. Huston's idea of a good woman is Hepburn in *The African Queen*. How unlimited must be his secret contempt for Marilyn, this converted Jewish princess. She is more spoiled than Marjorie Morningstar! The one time Huston and Marilyn play at a crap table in Reno, she wants to know, "What should I ask the dice for, John?"

"Don't think, honey," he replies, "just throw."

Inquiring about the disposition of the dice is the measure of her muddling with magic. No. Huston will have small traffic with such female mystique.

Besides, there is talent in this movie that for once is equal to hers. Clift gives what is possibly the best performance of his life. A recluse from the company, and attached to his thermos of grapefruit juice and vodka (which comes into his veins as regularly as a rubber tube and jar of hospital glucose), he nonetheless impresses Gable altogether with his rushes. "In that scene at the table when he said, 'What was that they put in my arm?' he had a wild look in his eye that could only have come," Gable says, "from morphine . . . and booze . . . and the steers."

Huston nods. "You can believe Perce has had it all."

When Marilyn, however, did a breakfast scene with Gable that pleased Huston sufficiently for him to embrace her spontaneously (and then hug her again for the photographers) she told one of her staff to save the picture. "I want to have it to show around," she said, "when he begins saying mean things about me." This is hardly uncharacteristic of her distrust of all directors, but there is a difference. Someone like Billy Wilder might hate her, but in that hatred was helpless adoration. She senses that she is not Huston's favorite, that he does not *react* to her. She has then no secret leverage upon the heart of the director. Pure perfidy of Miller, she begins to discover that the film can always go back to what it was from the beginning, a fine story about three good men whose way of living is almost ready to disappear. It was supposed to be her vehicle and yet she is in danger of being incidental to it. Finally she will have to act her utmost in order not to be left in the others' wake. Perhaps she even resorts to a trick. There had been a scene on which she counted much (indeed, she needed every one of her scenes to keep up with the men) and this was

the moment when Gay Langland came back to the bed in the morning after their first night together and embraced her. In the script she must have seen it as some high moment of romance, an unforgettable fifty feet of film history—Gable Kisses Monroe. But Huston preferred to maintain his reserve with love scenes—why slide around in the muck after every other director had gone through the old town pipe? So he keeps their lovemaking dry. A middle-aged cowboy and a nice blonde offer a near-documentary style of hello, let's have some eggs, it's morning, wasn't last night fine?

Since she had succeeded, however, in playing the scene with only a sheet to cover her nakedness (which was also fair documentary—how else under such chaste circumstance could the audience know they had slept together?), and since there were two cameras on her, purposefully or inadvertently she let enough of the sheet slip to expose a breast on *Take Seven* to one of the two cameras, thereby creating a dilemma that would not be settled until the hour of distribution. Should they release the film with the shot of Monroe's nude breast? Monroe, no surprise, is for it. "I love to do the things the censors won't pass. After all, what are we all here for, just to stand around and let it pass us by?" Huston replies, "I've always known that girls have breasts." No, he will not want the aesthetic slant of his film to be nudged by her competitive tit. And the picture, when it finally comes out, has a clear view only of her back. The episode, however, offers its clue to her idea of cinematic balance. She would yet have to compete with Gable the King and Clift the Genius, plus Eli Wallach with his complete set of actor's skills, and she is even convinced that Wallach has formed a conspiracy



with Miller to build up his part by giving Roslyn an affair with him. Conspiracy between Miller and Wallach or no, it is true Miller wants to rewrite. Wallach is too good an actor to have nothing to do at the end of the film but rant at Gable and Monroe. If he has even a fair little scene of doing the lindy with Marilyn, she will accuse Wallach of trying to upstage her, since most of the dance takes place with her back to the camera, but then, sharpening the barb, will add, "The audience is going to find my ass more interesting than Eli's face." (She is reported to say "rear," but we know better.) She has been friends with Wallach for five years. Now it is as if in breaking with Miller she is moving from one land to another, for in private she even says to Eli, "You Jewish men don't understand anything."

Is she thinking of the Reform rabbi who told her there is no afterlife? Or of the duplicities in Miller's plot? The concept of this movie is by now three years old. For three years she has lived with the beautiful idea that some day she and Arthur would make a film that would bestow upon her public identity a soul. Her existence as a sex queen will be reincarnated in a woman. It is not that her sex will disappear so much as that the sex queen will become an angel of sex. While she had accomplished something like this already in *Some Like It Hot*, Sugar Kane was a flawed angel—she had no mind. Whereas Marilyn wanted to present herself at her best. Or at least as Miller's early and enraptured idea of her (which we can assume she must alternately have been delighted with and disbelieved), a woman so sensitive and alive, so nubile as flesh and so evanescent as a wisp of vapor, that to present herself in such a way to the world might wipe away all the old killing publicity of the past. It was as if she wanted to become the angel of American life; as if, beneath every remaining timidity and infirmity, she felt that she deserved it. Perhaps she did. Are there ten women's lives so Napoleonic as her own? So she had to hope (with the part of herself

not without hope) that the final version of *The Misfits* would be her temple.

Of course, her power to comprehend the relation of the part to the whole was never superb. Actors rarely have such power. When they do, they become directors. Perhaps she never recognized how completely *The Misfits* was a narrative about men. In its original form, it was certainly one of the best short stories about men ever written in a Hemingway tradition. Indeed, much of the prose could pass for Hemingway writing in his quietest manner. It is possibly the best piece of prose Miller ever wrote, and since the subject was a departure for him—he had known next to nothing about cowboys—and he did it in that bold time when he was getting a divorce and embarking on the adventure of his life, a sense of male optimism lives better in that short story than in the film. Miller's strength had always been to write about men. It was just that in *The Misfits* the men were stronger than they had ever been before. And cleaner. (As he may have been in the weeks he wrote it.)

Difficulties were then implicit in bringing Marilyn into the film—not any actress, but Marilyn in a portrait of consummate loveliness. While Roslyn already existed in the short story, she was offstage and merely talked about, an agreeable and attractive middle-aged eastern woman living with Gay Langland (and supporting him). His friends, the other two cowboys, were also attracted to her, powerfully attracted, and Langland did not even know if she was faithful or not. Every movie possibility obviously existed for conflict and drama. But that was opposed to what Marilyn desired. She had no wish to be sleeping with two or three men in *her* film; she wanted respect! It was the cry of her life. Unhappily, she

had come to decide no audience would give that accolade to an actress who has carnal knowledge of two or more characters in one film. It is still 1960. So Miller's dramatic choices become limited. She can have a dalliance with Monty Clift and/or Eli Wallach, but only as in a mist. Marilyn wanted her film affair with Gable to be idyllic (exposed breast and all!), and Gable doubtless wanted no less. He was too old and too grand to be seen in some demeaning jealous state—his dignity had been the fuel of his own performances for the last fifteen years. How then is the script to move from celebration of its splendid stars to some obligatory minimum of conflict and plot? Miller is obliged to make the character of Roslyn so tender that the capture of a few wild horses is all of disaster for her, a dramatic bubble that cannot help but burst, since she also, as Miller himself points out in the short story, loves her dog, while neglecting to recognize that the meat in the can out of which she feeds that dog has come precisely from a wild horse. So Roslyn becomes a role that sits in the most hypocritical part of Monroe's nature—where she bleeds for the death of little fish and tries to kill her mate. It is also possible, however, that Marilyn does not begin to assess how unplayable will be her part by the end of *The Misfits* until she is deep into the film, or even done with it—then, too late, she will recognize that her share of the last reel is shrill—a liberal version of “we must stop the locomotive at the pass.” So she has to stop Gable, Clift, and Wallach from bringing in the horses, but cinematically what we see is Gable, Clift, and Wallach taking chances, being knocked to the ground under rearing animals or dragged along by runaways, while she screams on the sidelines or dashes in hysteria from one to the

other until the movie audience is ready to yell, "Shut that bitch up!" Since her life is full of paradox, it is natural that the film by which she hopes to attain dignity will be the one that finally gives her the least.

At the end it is Gable who is canonized. Gay Langland has become the apotheosis of Gable. "Where are you going?" Wallach asks as Clark and Marilyn drive off in a truck at the end.

Miller put in no reply. Gable knew better. "Home," he answers Wallach in his guttiest voice, and the movie screen in every small-town theatre of America would give its little jump. He had finally found his role. Being Clark Gable had also been better than wages. As he drove along with Marilyn through the desert and the last of the film closed down on them, he said, "Just head for that big star. . . ." They were finally done with *The Misfits*. Perhaps it was his best moment since Rhett Butler smiled and said, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

Of course, the film company had come down toward the end of their work in something like the bewildered ribald state of an army that has lived off the substance of a town for months and has forgotten the patriotic premise of its war. They had no idea if what they had done was good or ill. It was almost as if filming in Nevada was bound therefore to close with scenes of dust and strife while stuntmen were struck in the head by horses' hooves and Gable was dragged behind a truck on a rope, even as at night social lines were obliged to be drawn to a comic nicety: while Marilyn is losing the biggest bet of her life, Paula Strasberg is giving a party for Marilyn whose point seems to be that Miller and his intimates are not invited. Strasberg's *Revenge*—a Balkan *melodrame*! To which in turn Huston

gave a party for Miller and Clift to which everybody was invited. There the cameraman, Russell Metty, delivered a valedictory. Of course, only the Cameraman could speak in such a tongue, for he was the altar at which actors' prayers were laid. When the altar speaks, it is in good voice: "Arthur writes scripts," Metty said, "and John shoots ducks. First Arthur screwed up the script and now his wife is screwing it up. Why don't you wish him a happy birthday, Marilyn? Arthur doesn't know whether the horse should be up or down. Marilyn thinks we should keep the scene showing her half-naked in bed. Monty is buying into the Del Monte grapefruit business. . . . This is truly the biggest bunch of misfits I ever saw." Applause.

When the company left Nevada to work in Hollywood on final process shots, more small comedy continued. Looking at the rough cut, an executive from United Artists was unhappy, it did not seem a Huston film where "you put the ingredients in, and he builds up a terrific head of steam." The executive said if he didn't know, he wouldn't have had a clue to who the director might be. Miller agreed that he, too, was disappointed. Huston replied, "These things are missing in the script." Now they played again with the idea of writing new scenes for Wallach until Gable refused, and then over the next few weeks of editing and adding music, went through the other predictable drama, Huston and Miller, of coming to like each other's work again. They had aid. The film ~~had become~~ ^{became} affecting after all. For Gable had a massive heart attack the day after shooting finished, and would die in the hospital eleven days later. Every scene in which he now ~~appeared~~ could bring to mind half the history of Hollywood's years.

*Death with dignity
was a real triumph*

(end)

694

~~the day after~~ A MIGHTY MOTHER

OSWALD'S TALE / 409
409-415

1960-1961

... Mrs. OSWALD stated that she was very much shocked and surprised to learn later that ~~he~~^{her son} had gone to Moscow, Russia. She stated that she had no idea how he arrived there but that she does know he had saved up about \$1600 from his services in the U.S. Marine Corps. She stated that he did not previously discuss with her any intention to go to Moscow, Russia. She also stated that he had never shown any proclivities for the ideologies of communism [but] subject was always a studious type of individual and that he read books that were considered "deep." [While Mrs. Oswald] felt that subject had a right as an individual to make his own decisions, however, she stated that she was very greatly surprised and disappointed that he had taken this action [and] since January 22, 1960, she had sent three different letters to her son but that all had been returned to her undelivered. She stated that she feared that he might have become stranded and in danger [so] she has had correspondence with her Congressman and with the U.S. State Department inasmuch as she has been very much

Start

~~subject~~ # Marguerite Oswald had

~~had~~ ~~begin~~ ~~efforts~~ ~~to~~ ~~find~~ ~~out~~ ~~what~~ ~~had~~ ~~happened~~ ~~to~~ ~~Lee~~. She had written to her Texas congressman, Jim Wright, on March 6, 1960, and a day later to Christian Herter of the State Department:

Dear Sir:

In October 1959 my son (age 20 years) Lee Harvey Oswald (serial no. 1653230) went to Moscow, Russia, three days after his discharge from the Marine Corps . . .

I am very much concerned because I have no contact whatsoever with him now . . .

I am writing to you because I am under the impression that Lee is probably stranded and even if he now realizes he has made a mistake he would have no way of financing his way home. He probably needs help.

I also realize that my son might like Russia. That he might be working and be quite content. In that case, feeling very strongly that he has a right as an individual to make his own decisions, I would in no way want to hinder or influence him in any way.

If it is at all possible to give me any information concerning my son, I would indeed be very grateful.

Thanking you in advance for your kindness in this matter.

I remain

Sincerely,

Mrs. Marguerite Oswald²

Confidential memos will go back and forth between State and the American Embassy in Moscow discussing whether the Embassy is in a position to find out from the Soviets where Oswald is located, but the inquiry falls between the cracks.

Bureaucracy is the only form of human organization that can manage to pass a hot potato through a small crack. Ten and one half months will go by before State will hear from Marguerite Oswald again. That lady, however, has been gathering her forces. The next time they hear from her, she is on their doorstep. At the Warren Commission hearings, she will recall the occasion clearly:

It is January 21, 1961, the day after President Kennedy's Inauguration.

MARGUERITE OSWALD. . . I arrived at Washington 8 o'clock in the morning. I took a train and borrowed money on an insurance policy I have, [plus] I had a bank account of \$36, which I drew out and bought a pair of shoes. I have all that in proof, sir, the date that I left for the train. I was 3 days and 2 nights on the train, or 2 days and 3 nights. Anyhow, I took a coach and sat up.

I arrived at the station 8 o'clock in the morning and I called the White House. A Negro man was on the switchboard, and he said the offices were not open yet, they did not open until 9 o'clock. He asked if I would leave my number. I asked to speak to the President. And he said the offices were not open yet. I said, "Well, I have just arrived here from Fort Worth, Texas, and I will call back at 9 o'clock."

So I called back at 9 o'clock. Everybody was just gracious to me over the phone. Said that President Kennedy was in a conference, and they would be happy to take any message. I asked to speak with Secretary Rusk and they connected me with that office. And his young lady said he was in a conference, but anything she could do for me. I said, "Yes, I have come to town about a son of mine who is lost in Russia. I do want to speak—I would like personally to speak to Secretary Rusk." So she got off the line a few minutes. Whether she gave him the message or what I do not know. She came back and said, "Mrs. Oswald, Mr.

Rusk [said] that you talk to Mr. Boster who is special officer in charge of Soviet Union affairs,"—if I am correct. And Mr. Boster was on the line. I told him who I was. He said, "Yes, I am familiar with the case, Mrs. Oswald." He said, "Will an 11 o'clock appointment be all right with you?" This is 9 o'clock in the morning. So I said—this is quite an interesting story—I said, "Mr. Boster, that would be fine. But I would rather not talk with you." I didn't know who Mr. Boster was. I said, "I would rather talk with Secretary of State Rusk. However, if I am unsuccessful in talking with him, then I will keep my appointment with you."

So I asked Mr. Boster—I said, "Mr. Boster, would you please recommend a hotel that would be reasonable?" He said, "I don't know how reasonable, Mrs. Oswald, but I recommend the Washington Hotel. It will be near the State Department and convenient to you."

So I went to the Washington Hotel. [And] they asked me if I had a reservation. I said, "No, I didn't but Mr. Boster of the State Department recommended that I come here." So they fixed me up with a room. I took a bath and dressed. I went to the appointment [and] arrived at Mr. Boster's office at 10:30.

But before arriving at Mr. Boster's office, I stopped at a telephone in the corridor and I called Dean Rusk's office again because I didn't want to see Mr. Boster, and I asked to speak to Dean Rusk. And the young lady said, "Mrs. Oswald, talk to Mr. Boster. At least it is a start."

So then I entered around the corridor into Mr. Boster's office [and he] came out and said, "Mrs. Oswald, I am awfully glad you came early because we are going to have a terrible snow storm and we have orders to leave early in order to get home."

So he called [in two other men and] we were in conference. So I showed the papers like I am showing here. And I said, "Now, I know you are not going to answer me, gentlemen, but I am under the impression that my son is an agent." "Do you mean a Russian agent?" I said, "No, working for our Government, a U.S. agent. And I want to say this: That if he is, I don't appreciate it too much, because I am destitute, and just getting over a sickness," on that order.

I had the audacity to say that. I had gone through all of this without medical, without money, without compensation. I am a desperate woman. So I said that.

MR. RANKIN. What did they say to you?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. They did not answer that. I even said to them, "No, you won't tell me." So I didn't expect them to answer that.

THE CHAIRMAN. Did you mean that you were seeking money from them?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. No, sir . . . What I was saying was that I think that my son should be home with me, is really what I implied [but] I didn't come out and say I want my son home. I implied that if he was an agent, that I thought he needed to be home.

MR. RANKIN. Did you say anything about believing your son might know full well what he was doing in trying to defect to the Soviet Union, he might like it better there than he did here?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. I do not remember saying this . . . I said—because I remember this distinctly. I said, "Now, he has been exploited all through the paper as a defector. If he is a defector"—because, as we stated before, I don't know he is an agent, sir—"and if he is a defector, that is his privilege as an individual."

And they said, "Mrs. Oswald, we want you to know that we feel the same way about it." That was their answer.³

Still, Marguerite was not about to give up the more interesting alternative. A little later on that day in 1964 when she testified before the Warren Commission about events early in 1961, she would add:

MARGUERITE OSWALD. . . . ~~On January 21, 1961, I was in Washington, D.C.~~ Approximately 8 weeks later, on March 22, 1961, I received a letter from the State Department informing me . . . that my son wishes to return back to the United States—just 8 weeks after my trip to Washington.

Now, you want to know why I think my son is an agent. And I have been telling you all along.

Here is a very important thing why my son was an agent. . . . On April 30, 1961, he marries a Russian girl—approximately 5 weeks later.

Now, why does a man who wants to come back to the United States, [only] 5 weeks later [decide to] marry a Russian girl? Because I say—and I may be wrong—the U.S. Embassy has ordered him to marry this Russian girl. . . .

MR. RANKIN. Now, was there any time that Marina said anything to you to lead you to believe that she thought your son, Lee, married her because he was an agent?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. No, sir, no, sir. Not at any time at all.

MR. RANKIN. You think she loved him?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. I believe that Marina loved him in a way. But I believe that Marina wanted to come to America. I believe that Lee had talked America to her, and she wanted to come . . .

MR. RANKIN. I am not clear about this being ordered to marry her. You don't mean that your son didn't love her.

MARGUERITE OSWALD. Well, I could mean that—if he is an agent, and he has a girl friend, and it is to the benefit of the country that he marry this girl friend, and the Embassy helped him get this Russian girl out of Russia—let's face it, well, whether he loved her or not, he would take her to America if that would give him contact with Russians, yes, sir.

MR. RANKIN. Is that what you mean?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. I would say that.

MR. RANKIN. And you don't think it was because your son loved her, then?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. I do not know whether my son loved her or not. But I am telling you why he would do this in five weeks' time . . .

MR. RANKIN. . . . I think it is a very serious thing to say about your son, that he would do a thing like that to a girl.

MARGUERITE OSWALD. No, sir, it is not a serious thing. I know a little about the CIA and so on, the U-2, Powers, and things that have been made public. They go through any extreme for their country. I do not think that would be serious for him to marry a Russian girl and bring her here, so he would have contact. I think that is all part of an agent's duty.

MR. RANKIN. You think your son was capable of doing that?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. Yes, sir, I think my son was an agent. I certainly do.⁴

END

Late 1960 - early 1971

699
HARLOT'S GHOST | 915

pp 915-917

Here's another bit of blood gossip not to be repeated. We've buried a function in the woodwork. It's called ZR/RIFLE and is a capacity that I wish we had developed in advance of all our Maheu projects. Bissell has asked Helms to get it started, and Helms promptly consulted your godfather. Who does Sir Hugh propose to oversee the new capacity, but Bill Harvey? Amazing—taking into account their old enmity.

I end here for the nonce. I'm having a night out tonight which I do look forward to, but will pick up this communication tomorrow.

A BOSS BOOZE-UP

Friday, the Thirteenth

That was one good night, last night, fellow. Allen had the wit—God, I love that man when he's at his best—to invite all the new Kennedy muckamucks to an evening with a number of us at the Alibi Club. He wanted to put the top new Washington folk into a more gung-ho frame of mind for the Cuban op, and I believe we brought it off. I must say, the Alibi Club was the perfect place for this, just as fusty inside as, let's say, the Somerset Club in Boston. The old menus on the wall set the note, "Turtle Soup, 25 cents," and the martinis are good. It relaxed the young new Kennedy breed, and a few of them are pretty young, I must tell you, and awfully bright, and fitted up with an all-around alert system as to where the next cue is coming from. Bright young top-of-the-Law-Review gents, but instinctive as well. On the other hand, they are certainly in way over their heads. With all due respect to your mother's ancient blood, they do remind me a bit of Phi Beta Kappas (Jewish) at a coming-out party. There was also a contingent of Kennedy's Irish Mafia, just as suspicious as FBI monks, and tough, flinty, ready to strong-arm an issue. However, they are also just ignorant enough to be in over their heads. So the get-together was a good idea. Bissell made a hell of a speech in his gold-plated archbishop's style. Presented himself as paleface of all the palefaces. Took one of his long fingers, poked himself in the chest, and said, "Take a good look at me. I'm the man who eats the sharks in this outfit." That had its impact. A distinguished churchman was talking dirty. It was our way of saying, "Just give us an assignment, brothers, and we will ram it home. We are not afraid of responsibility. We take on high risk. If you want to move mountains, call

on us." You could see all the Kennedy people imbibing Bissell's qualifications, Groton, Yale, Ph.D. in economics, and ready to eat sharks. Why, he's even taught at MIT.

I must say, we did feed them good stories. How to steal a country with three hundred men *à la* Guatemala. Cloak-and-dagger has to be the second-oldest profession, Allen told them. And in the course of it, lots of first-rate toasts were exchanged. Then Allen called on me. Damn, the glint in his spectacles was adjuring me in no uncertain terms to recount my now hoary exploits with the secretaries. Back in 1947, in case you never heard, I captured scads of poop on what Truman's Cabinet people were planning because I got to know (in the Biblical sense) a few of the top office girls. Last night, I rounded it off by saying, "Of course, we don't do these things anymore." The Kennedy people loved it. I think the note Allen wished to strike was that we were absolutely the right organization for a roistering jack-in-the-sack like our own President-Elect.

I wasn't going to let myself, however, get stuck in the Department of Legends as one more over-the-hill stunt man, so I went off on a reasonably witty presentation to the effect that we can look forward, White House and CIA, to great times together since we possess in common a liking for the work of Ian Fleming. Let's give a toast to good old Ian Fleming, I said, holding the flagon high. Someone actually did mutter, "His work is such crap!"—I can hear you speaking in that young voice—but I came back with, "Ian Fleming, a stylist for our time." And a few of us on the Agency side, which I suppose comes down to Dulles, Bissell, Montague, Barnes, Helms, and myself, were thinking of those rather Ian Fleming-like toys that have come out of Technical Services, such as the depilatory to take off Fidelito's beard back in 1959 when he visited the UN. At an effectiveness level, it was all pure Dartmouth yahoo crap, but a few of us in the room knew that I was pretending to more, so it was permissible to laugh like hell. We got the idea across. They now understood that we were monkeys with as many tricks in our cage as they had in theirs. We communicated the notion that if you want a quick answer to a knotty problem, CIA is the place to go. Not, repeat, *not* the State Department.

Dean Rusk got a longer and longer face as the evening wore

on. I think he was the first to sense what a splendid theatrical grasp Allen has on how-to-make-new-friends in transitional times. Rusk looks constipated. Probably loses half an hour every morning on the evacuation detail.

In any case, I am now on the move again. At least within. Which is what morale is all about.

Your good father,
Big-Bucks Halifax

P.S. Despite all this self-congratulation, I won't neglect to mention RETREAD. He worries me. BONANZA ought to be able to follow the money trail RETREAD has to be leaving in his Miami banks if he is as crooked as I expect he is.

36 | In Montevideo, after Kittredge discontinued our correspondence, I used to see a good deal more of Hunt, and now, bereft of Modene, I began once more to have dinner with him a couple of nights a week. History was repeating itself. Howard's mood was not far from mine. Dorothy was in Washington, and the news received each night by telephone was often of her mother who was hospitalized with an inoperable cancer. In addition, his social life, so important to him, was hardly thriving. He might keep up with Palm Beach parties in the society columns, but he was driving through no gates these days in white dinner jacket; the royal palms and poinciana trees on the great estates, the tiled fountains, stone urns, and balustrades of the Palm Beach palaces were remote; he walked no paths between jasmine and bougainvillea, and danced with panache on no marble floor. Nor did he spend his afternoons at Hialeah watching pink flamingos cross a green lawn, no, Howard was in

Ian Fleming Revisited ✓

I had a spider once
 and fed it neon tubes
 until its web did gleam
 like Las Vegas in the dawn
 Roulette I used to call her
 and the spider
 drinking dew from grapefruit rind
 to oil the knees
 would smile and say:
 every Roulette has her croupier.

VALYA-II 1946-1961

OSWALD'S TALE

PA 15-25

703

Meaning that when the system was closed, and Ilya was
wished to keep Valya near him, he arranged to give her a job, and
she cooked for Russian soldiers and officers.

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

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

glad

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

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

had married a woman who had a problem with a burn mark on her face. Everyone said, "Couldn't he find someone who's his match?" And, of course, they talked about it. But Ilya did like young women, and she was young.

In the beginning, Valya couldn't get used to such an educated family as these Prusakovs. She was, after all, from a village. Later on she would learn, but at first it was not easy to do what was expected. There were so many new persons that she felt a little bit closed. Still, she was always trying to learn, and Ilya's mother, Tatiana, taught her a lot.

Tatiana was a very good cook. Since Valya was always around her, she learned to be better in the kitchen than Ilya's sisters. It helped that Ilya never made excuses about Valya; he said, "This is the woman I love"—that was it. He had brought her from Germany. If you don't love a woman, you don't take her home with you.

In their first years together, Valya wanted to have children, and every month she would cry, and Ilya would always say, "Don't worry." Now, she wonders if he was ever truly upset about it. When he was old, he even said to her: "Maybe it's good we didn't have children: Look around. Nowadays, children are not really good."

Of course, there were always lots of people around. In Arkhangelsk, they lived in Tatiana's apartment, which had three rooms. First thing Tatiana said was, "I have five daughters. Now, you'll be my sixth." That pleased Valya so much that she fell in love with Ilya for a second time, because she realized he had a happy family life already, and so if he had chosen her, that meant he really loved her. It wasn't as if he just needed her. Besides, his family lived together with love like Valya's family, but in a different way, more grace. More cultural. So she could love him more, because he changed her life for the better.

But she didn't have much freedom. Everyone's eyes were always on her, and she remembers that once when they were in bed, she even cried because she did not feel alone with him.

One night, they brought out an album of photographs, and Valya had to think how different it was from her family, where they'd never had anything like that, so poor. So she was embarrassed when they sat around their big table and his mother asked, "Now, tell me your stories, tell me about yourself." Fortunately, Ilya's mother then said, "You know, Ilyusha's first wife was brought up by a step-mother." Valya got upset, so she touched her husband's foot under the table, and he touched back, which she understood to mean,

"Don't tell her," and she didn't. But later on her mother-in-law asked, "Why do you always talk about your father? Why do you never tell me anything about your mother?" So she confessed. She, too, was brought up by a stepmother.

In this Prusakov family in Arkhangelsk were Ilya's sister Klavdia and her two children, Marina and Petya, conceived from separate fathers. There was also another sister, Musya, and still another, Lyuba, who lived with them, but the center of this household was Marina, Klavdia's daughter, who was five years old and very pretty and very bright. She had large beautiful blue eyes, and her grandmother more than admired her. You could say that Tatiana was completely in love with her. Marina was not exactly spoiled, but she was *izbalovanaya*, which is a little nicer than spoiled, for it means somebody who may have been loved too much. There was certainly a tendency to deal with Marina more leniently than a strict parent might accept. But she was a child you could like, and in school Marina got very high marks, and all her family was for Marina.

There was no father around, however, only a stepfather, named Alexander Medvedev, and at first he treated Marina very well, even after his first child with Klavdia, Petya, was born.

As for Marina's natural father, Valya was never sure what happened to him. He had disappeared in 1941, before Marina was born. Ilya never explained. He just said that Marina's missing father was a nice man, and Klavdia's sister Musya said she met him one time, and he was attractive, very attractive eyes, an engineer, whose name was Nikolaev. Nikolaev and Ilya had worked together building a small new city where before there had only been water and marsh, but now it exists, Severodvinsk, about fifty kilometers north of Arkhangelsk.

As for Nikolaev, Valya thinks maybe they didn't tell her any more about him because the Prusakov family did not want to disgrace themselves. Perhaps Nikolaev had been married to another woman and just made a baby with Klavdia and left. On the other hand, this all happened in Stalin's time. So Nikolaev could have been deported. Valya remembers how when she was a child Stalin once said: "We have started to live better and we have more fun." There had been a man in the crowd who heard this slogan and he added, "Yes, so much fun that you could cry." He was taken to prison for that. It was a terrible time. So, people had the habit of not talking. In any event, Ilya always said that Nikolaev was a good man.

Of course, Valya did not know much about such things. She lived at home and took care of things for her mother-in-law. Neither then nor later did she go to Ilya's office. He had a job in MVD—Ministry of Internal Affairs—and he would always be in MVD; he never left. Nor did she know exactly what kind of work he did, whether he was an office manager or a production manager. She knew there were people who worked in factories and camps who'd been sentenced for things they did. Ilya never worked directly with such people; he was more like someone who controlled production. He dealt with people who were managing factories. He didn't have the highest position, but he did have responsibilities in his job, and she would say he was happy with that. Certainly he never discussed anything negative with her.

Despite all those years in Arkhangelsk with Ilya's family, it was still a good life, because at least Valya and her husband had a separate room. They could make no noise, but still, one could live like that even if she couldn't look forward to summer, because Ilya didn't like to hunt for mushrooms. Mosquitoes were terrible in Arkhangelsk in summer, so you couldn't say you were going out with your husband to search for mushrooms and get to be alone out there in fields full of grass.

Arkhangelsk, in this period, was not yet a big city and didn't have many roads. Most were mud, or made of logs, but their Dvina River was deep, and oceangoing ships could come in from the White Sea. Still, it was much too cold. Ilya had some kind of arthritis in his back and needed to live in a warmer climate. In 1951, therefore, they moved to Minsk, first Ilya, then a month later Valya joined him, and at first they had to share a kitchen with a strange family and only had one room, although later, because of his job, they would live better. But again, Valya did not know exactly what kind of work he did, because of his being in this special Ministry controlling production under both Military and Security. In fact, Ilya's office was now in that same big building where KGB was located; MVD and KGB were both in a large yellow structure, five stories high, with columns in front—a government building, classical, with small doors, Valya remarked, for so large a place.

Ilya was, of course, a member of the Communist Party, but he and Valya never talked much about it, and he never asked her to join. In fact, he never said a word about it. While he was not what you could call devoted, he was responsible, and he was loyal; he paid fees regularly and did what he had to do; on everything he

was responsible. If all Communists had been like Ilya, then it would be a different world, because Ilya was very honest. Valya never met anyone more so than him.

Valya had to like Minsk. It had been destroyed twice during the Great Patriotic War—once when the Germans came in and once when the Germans retreated back into Poland three years later. Ninety percent of Minsk had been leveled by all that. All the same, a decision was taken after the war to rebuild not in a different location, which would have been easier, but right over the ruins. That was in 1945. By the time Valya and Ilya moved there in 1951, Minsk's town center had been rebuilt in a new style. The city didn't look at all like it used to. Minsk had been a very large township of numberless small wooden houses all leaning against one another. Now it was stately. It had five- and six-story buildings with lots of yellow stone, like in Leningrad, and broad avenues, with good apartment houses that looked as if they'd been built a hundred years ago. Now, in 1951, it was a clean city, free of ruins, and food was everywhere: black caviar, red caviar, many different types of sausages and cheeses. She and Ilya didn't have a lot of money, but enough, and they lived near the center, which had been very well built by German prisoners before they had gone back to their country. Even Ilya's mother, who didn't want to leave Arkhangelsk, because she had a good apartment with three rooms and didn't pay a lot for it, was impressed when she came to Minsk. After she'd been there for a couple of months, she said, "Oh, here I feel as if I am in heaven," and at about this time, they were able to move into two rooms, and went on that way for years, with Tatiana, Valya, and Ilya all living in one small apartment, sharing a kitchen with a neighbor who had three children and worked as a prosecutor. They got along with them well, and in fact, their neighbors were upset when they moved, and said, "We'll never meet such nice people again." Of course, their toilet was in the yard, and one had to go out there when it was zero and worse, but then Valya felt strong. Since childhood, she had been used to going about without shoes, yet now at night Ilya would wake up too and say, "Wear your shoes." She was used to going barefoot in snow as a child, so it did not seem necessary to put on shoes to walk thirty meters to a toilet in their apartment-house yard.

In this period, between 1955 and 1960, Valya knew that this production which Ilya oversaw was done with prisoners. Her husband never said anything to her, but sometimes when fellow officers

came over for dinner and drinks, she would hear them talking, and she knew there was a plan to be fulfilled: People should work well, and deliver production according to plan. But they never discussed it as husband and wife.

Valya could keep secrets. If you told her not to say something, she wouldn't. Once Ilya was on a business trip and telephoned her and said that one of his colleagues would come over to their apartment, and she should give him a key to his safe.

Shortly afterward, somebody knocked at her door and a man in civilian clothes entered and asked if he could have that key. She said to herself, "Maybe someone listened to my telephone conversation." So she asked, "Can you show me your I.D.?" And not until he did would she give him the key.

Later, he told Ilya, "You have such a wife! She demanded my I.D.!" Valya didn't know what kind of secrets Ilya had in his safe, but if he told her to do something, she did it properly.

Valya's only trip to Leningrad occurred when Marina was eleven or twelve. Klavdia lived in Leningrad then with her husband, Alexander Medvedev, in one room with three children, and when Valya and Ilya and Tatiana arrived, it was difficult, all eight people in one room, a huge family for so small a space, even worse because Alexander Medvedev also had a mother who did not take to Klavdia, and didn't like her son to be married to a woman who had a child by another man. This mother of Medvedev was a very intelligent woman, but mean and fat, a witch. So Marina's situation was now different, and she was no longer at the center of her family.

At this time, before Klavdia died, Medvedev did treat Marina and her mother properly, but still there were difficulties. Klavdia had an advanced case of rheumatism, and Ilya once told Valya: "You can see how sick she is." Besides, Alexander's attitude toward Marina had changed as his own two children with Klavdia grew older. Alexander now punished Marina a lot, and matters did get worse once Klavdia died, just before Marina turned sixteen.

Two years later, Marina wrote to Valya and Ilya in Minsk to tell them that it was very difficult for her to stay any longer with her stepfather, and asked if she could come to live with them.

Such a request was not too welcome for Valya. She was tired of her relatives. She didn't show it, but for all these years somebody in Ilya's family had always been living with them. Tatiana even died in their home. In her last ten months, Valya had taken care of her so

well that before she went, she said to Valya, "I have survived only because of you, Valya." Ilya was in effect the father of his family, and that was fine, except that Valya felt he could give time to his wife only when they went to bed.

Still, when Marina arrived at the train station, Valya saw that she had only one suitcase, and pitied her. The girl seemed so happy to be able to move to Minsk. She was shy and, for a while, very obedient. Just a sweet eighteen-year-old. Marina had a natural color to her lips and never used lipstick. She was attractive even if she was afraid to smile—one of her front teeth was a little in front of the other. It would all have been nice if Valya didn't have to share her life with one more relative again.

Of course, Marina didn't know much about housework. If Valya asked her to do something, Marina would try it, but she couldn't cook. She did wash her own clothes, and hardly knew how to do that properly. Then, when Marina got a place in a hospital pharmacy, for which kind of work she'd been trained in Leningrad, she was usually tired when she came back from her job, so she didn't really have house duties. She was free to go to movies, to parties, to plays. Valya, after all, did not go out to work, so she was responsible for the apartment. Sometimes Marina washed floors, and sometimes she washed dishes, and certainly when she was eating alone, she never left dirty plates for Valya. And she had her job. People were needed in pharmacy work, and Marina liked her occupation. She told Valya and Ilya, "I'll cure you," because at that time she had access to medicine.

The only trouble Valya could foresee might yet be with dates, although Marina was usually critical of them. If a boy said something wrong or bought something cheap, that was goodbye! She told Valya that she stopped seeing a man she had dated in Leningrad because he bought her cheap sweets. Of course, being that critical was an unusual matter for someone in her position. Girls like Marina, with no more than a vocational education, were not considered to be as outstanding as girls who went to an Institute or to Universities. So girls like Marina were not usually dated for serious relationships by the best young men in the best schools. But Marina only liked people who were educated.

Valya never saw her go out with an average man. She had lots of boyfriends, students at an Institute or at the University of Minsk, and she went to their parties with her best friend, Larissa, and spent all her earnings for clothes. After all, Ilya and Valya were not

going to take a part of her salary for food. Sometimes, if Marina wanted money for theatre or movies, she would make her own clothes.

She was very industrious. She liked to sew, do embroidery, and she cut up Valya's old fur coats to make hats for herself.

She also read a lot, particularly Theodore Dreiser. Marina loved Dreiser, who was very popular at this time, but then, there were hundreds of books in their apartment, because Ilya had purchased complete sets of works by famous Russian authors, and Valya would read Chekhov and Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov. Marina, however, chose Dreiser. Writers like Chekhov she was always having to get through in school.

Taken on the whole, it was all right having Marina there. Valya never minded that she did not contribute to their living, because Marina had been so poor when she arrived that she didn't even have underwear, and her salary was small. She needed everything—shoes, stockings, clothes from her head to her feet—and Valya pitied her, for Marina had had a very difficult destiny. Marina even told Valya that she loved her. Loved her a lot. Marina said Valya was the first woman to treat her decently and give her all this freedom, and in turn, Valya loved and pitied her.

Ilya was much more strict. He worried till Marina came back at night from a date. Not everything went smoothly between them, either, for Marina had a quick tongue. On the other hand, there was one young man with very good manners that Ilya liked, a young medical student named Sasha, and Ilya even had coffee with him. And, of course, there wasn't really all that much friction with Ilya, because Marina didn't come home late all that often. Not when he was home. Marina saved her late nights for those times when Ilya was away on a business trip and Valya was alone. Marina had told Valya that in Leningrad her stepfather, Medvedev, didn't allow her back into his apartment if she was late. She would have to sleep on the outside staircase. Valya cried when she heard that.

Valya always wondered why, after Klavdia died and her stepfather mistreated her, Marina never asked any of her aunts or Ilya to take her in. "Why did she stay on in Leningrad so long—two more years?"

Yet, Marina was full of envy when she finally arrived. She said, "Oh, what a paradise you two have here." Valya never understood these remarks, because there wasn't anybody to work for Valya. If

it was as good as Marina described it, Valya was the one who worked hard to create it.

Still, there was no real problem with Marina. Her room was always neat and there was never any difficulty with their bathroom, which was inside now, and in turn, Valya would never say a word to her when she did come home late, because she trusted her to be a nice girl. For that matter, Marina shared her secrets. So Valya now knew which boyfriend she liked and those about whom she felt most critical.

Because of such knowledge, Valya pitied Sasha when Marina didn't treat him well. Valya just couldn't see people being handled so rudely. After all, Sasha came every time with flowers, and was so nice to Marina. And how Marina treated him!

In fact, he was so much in love with Marina that Ilya and Valya had even started to call him "son-in-law," but one day, feeling sorry for him, Valya told him that if you're going to marry Marina, you have to understand that she had a very difficult time in Leningrad. Sasha said, "I don't want to hear anything about that."

Marina came home about this time, overheard part of their conversation, took Valya into the kitchen to tell her how upset she was, then came out and said to Sasha, "I don't want to see you anymore."

It depressed Valya, but then you could say that Marina, living with her stepfather, Medvedev, had gotten used to being the boss of herself, anyway. No one could influence her, Valya decided, because Marina was accustomed to taking serious decisions without a mother, without a father. Valya knew, for example, that Marina was smoking. In Leningrad, somebody had introduced her to cigarettes that came in a pretty box. They were slender and slim and feminine. Valya knew she was smoking, because a neighbor saw Marina doing it in a restaurant and told Valya. It was fortunate Uncle Ilya was away in another city on business. And Valya had a toothache that time, so she said to Marina, "I took medicine; it doesn't help. I'm hurting. Give me one of your cigarettes." Marina was flabbergasted. She said, "I don't have any." Valya said, "Come on, don't lie to me. Go get it from your purse."

Marina said, "Did you check my things?" And Valya said, "I know you're smoking, so give me for my toothache. You know, nicotine, painkiller." After Marina passed one to her, Valya said, "You better stop doing it. If you don't quit, I'm going to tell Uncle Ilya."

But she wouldn't quit, Valya knew. Marina liked smoking. It was Western, adventurous. Like Italian cinema. Marina loved Fellini films so much.

Those movies certainly gave her ideas. Once, Marina even told Valya that in her opinion, Ilya was not for her; officers were always marrying educated women. Valya still remembers; it hurt so deeply.

Valya had been faithful to her husband, but Marina didn't understand why. She wanted Valya to have an affair. She even urged her. Since Valya couldn't have a baby with Ilya, why didn't Valya make a baby with someone else? "Why should you suffer because of him?" And Marina said that if Valya had a man over, she, Marina, could even sit at the entrance and watch to see if Ilya was coming. "You could have your affair, and then you could have a baby." To which Valya said, "No, I couldn't. If Ilya found out, he would kill me." Of course, Ilya was sometimes very strict with Marina. And Marina didn't like that. No one could offend her without being paid back. Once Valya and Marina were marinating cucumbers and needed leaves from a berry bush to flavor them, so they went to a theatre where there were many flowers outside, and a berry bush, and they started to pick leaves. There was a woman in charge of this park who began to scold them and said, "How do you dare? Don't you know why we put bushes and flowers around? Don't you know that we want to look beautiful so all of our city can enjoy it? And you come here and destroy such beauty?" But Marina said, "You know what we're going to do? Pickle cucumbers. Come visit us and you will have some cucumbers too. What are *you* doing, after all? We're not doing anything wrong." If it were not for Marina, maybe Valya would have been fined, but Marina could always stand by her decisions and feel that whatever she did was right.

One night in March of 1961, Ilya was away on a business trip and Marina went to a dance at the Trade Union Palace and then came back later that night and woke up Valya and whispered to her that she'd been dancing, and then she said, "Valya, get up. Show how cultured you are, because I have brought home an American. I brought you an American. Make a good cup of coffee." Marina was happy and said, "I would like for you to act educated."

Of course, Valya got scared. She almost shivered in bed. If Marina had come through the door with an American ten years earlier, back in Stalin's day, they'd all be in prison. Now, in 1961,

there was a big difference in feeling—they had gone from Stalin to Khrushchev—and so Valya remembers that she was not very worried and she got up and made coffee for the American, who was nice, very nice, and dressed very neatly. His name was Alik because, as she learned later, nobody could say Lee—it sounded like Li, that is, Chinese—and so it was a while before she learned his full American name was Lee Harvey Oswald.

end

2

Zyatouk

Sasha Piskalev, seventeen years old in the summer of 1958, could not pass his exams at Minsk Medical Institute the first time he tried. It was a serious blow. From childhood, Sasha had dreamed of becoming a doctor. He had been an ailing child, so he always loved and respected people in white gowns, and liked how they came and cured him and cured other people. Any person who could bring sick people over into a healthy state had to be very important. So, after he failed his exams, he obtained a job at Professor Bondarin's laboratory and served there as an assistant. Bondarin treated him well. Although Sasha was very young, this esteemed professor always called him by both his first name and by his father's first name, Nikolai, addressing him as Sanich, a nice way of speaking to somebody who's young, using the patronymic, Sasha Nikolaivich, by way of the short form, Sanich. And, by 1960, Sasha succeeded in becoming a medical student at the evening faculty while still working days with Professor Bondarin.

He also became friends with Professor Bondarin's nephew, Konstantin Bondarin. Kostya had finished high school while Sasha was working, and together they had passed their University exams. Kostya also had a friend named Yuri Merezhinsky, an only son of high-ranking scientists. Sasha didn't really have much time to run around with elite children in their easy life—he had to work, after all, and go to the University—but they took classes together and sometimes did go out afterward.

This may indeed be one reason that the KGB showed no quick interest in debriefing Oswald on military matters. Soon enough we will discuss whether they were concealing much or little from the interviewers who approached them for this book. But if, as the KGB would have known, all spotter codes would have been quickly changed on news of Oswald's defection, then, of course, they could afford to be patient with Oswald and study him.

One last word from the Marines; it is in the affidavit of Peter Francis Connor: "He claimed to be named after Robert E. Lee, whom he characterized as the greatest man in history."¹⁹

The KGB - General Marov



~~Return to Moscow and Minsk~~

For Americans, the most astonishing aspect of Oswald's defection was that he had been a Marine. Marines do not defect. They plant flags on Iwo Jima. Oswald had injured one of our Cold War certainties.

By contrast, the effect upon Moscow Center can better be described as a series of small but continuing disturbances.

Over the length of a six-month sojourn in Moscow and Minsk, the interviewers (Lawrence Schiller and Norman Mailer and their translator, Ludmila Peresvetova) had conversations with seventeen KGB officers. Some were active, most had retired, and of these seventeen men, there were five, including Igor and Stepan, who agreed to be interviewed in some depth. Within the limits of seeking to obtain answers from people who belong to what is, among other things, a closed club, the interviewers did acquire a reasonable amount of information. Whether these five officers were forthcoming or merely gulling the American visitors into acceptance of one more KGB legend can be debated, but if the interviewers, highly skeptical at first, ended by accepting the larger part of what was told to them, it is because an internal logic began to present itself.

For example, Oswald, by way of his Historic Diary, chooses eight o'clock in the evening as the hour at which he cuts his wrist,

whereas Rimma, Rosa, the Botkin Hospital doctors, and a number of medical reports have him coming to Reception at around 4:00 P.M., subsequent to making his attempt an hour and a half earlier. Now it could, of course, have been possible for the Organs to coordinate some twenty witnesses and falsify their reports, but to what end? What conceivably could be gained? Which dire purpose concealed? It seemed safe to conclude that these hospital accounts were correct and that Oswald had, once again, misremembered, or was lying.

Obviously, not everything related by the KGB officers resolves itself so neatly. Moreover, there was a collective desire among them to remain anonymous. Of the five main KGB sources, none wished his name to be used. "Please don't," said one, "or all my peace in retirement will be lost. The media will come to me."

Their requests were honored. Igor and Stepan are pseudonyms, and three of the others will be gathered into one voice. Unlike Igor and Stepan, these three officers were outspoken—their own reputations, after all, were not connected to the case. Besides, they were of high rank and seemed to enjoy the curious nature of the inquiry. Their response to the interviewers was usually in direct relation to the intelligence of the queries. An etiquette soon developed: An incisive, well-placed question produced signally better results than an off-balance lunge. Lack of incisiveness was a cardinal sin. It must be kept in mind that what we perceive as the brute work of KGB interrogations—physical torture, gulags, overt intimidations in public places—were acts usually performed by MVD and were scorned by KGB as practices that lacked finesse, even as CIA officers would look askance at the more brutal activities of high-security prisons like Marion and Attica and feel no identification with security guards.

Under these conditions of collective anonymity, it was decided that one imaginary KGB officer named General Marov might as well become sole spokesman for these three separate KGB sources. While not all three were generals, they could still serve as a chorus of high-level KGB reflection on Oswald's sojourn in Russia.

General Marov, then. If one would look for a face to attach, let us assume he looks like the late William Paley, who directed affairs at CBS for decades. The KGB men of higher rank looked astonishingly like a good many Americans—William Phillips of *Partisan Review*, Irving Howe of *Dissent*, Ben Bradlee of *The Washington Post*, Henry Miller, William Faulkner; one looked very much like the edi-

torial director of Random House, Jason Epstein, and there was even one officer who could have been mistaken in a dim room for Norman Mailer at the age of seventy. Thomas Wolfe once remarked that people in the same occupation tend to look alike in all countries—waiters, for example, or taxicab drivers. The corollary is that there may be profound similarities of character and function between American intellectuals, writers, and media chiefs—and high KGB officers. What wit resides in the cosmos!

Marov claimed not to know whether Oswald had given military information to the Japanese hostess at the Queen Bee in Tokyo. He did, however, say that if it were so, such information probably would have been available at Moscow Center late in 1959, when Oswald arrived.

"Such a contact," said Marov, "is, of course, precious. Any American in any form—military, merchant, scientist—any slight record of contact will be kept for years."

Oswald's defection would not, however, have excited good reactions in Moscow Center. "If any such information had come over from Japan in 1957 or 1958 and had given us any cause to value this man as a possible future agent, such value collapsed entirely," stated Marov, "in the moment Oswald declared that he wanted to remain here. The American community would know he had defected and his value would be zero as any kind of worker for us. Too tricky to play with. This," said Marov, "is an absolute fact."

The suicide attempt augmented their certainty. "That was a small disaster for the gentleman if he still clung to any ambitions to be trained as an agent. The KGB would never recruit such a man."

Then, said Marov, there was Oswald's adventure at the American Embassy. "He comes out of Botkin Hospital, visits his Embassy, and talks to the American official there in a loud, clear voice as if he is also speaking to any instruments, theirs or ours, that might be implanted in the wall. You know, my impression is that Oswald is not quite all right. A normal man would never come to such an Embassy and say, 'Okay, I'll give my secrets to the Russians.' What for? What is to be achieved by such declarations? After this, no KGB man could accept his information. It is not precious enough to risk discrediting our Soviet authorities. Whatever is given to the KGB must be done secretly, deeply, and with very strong precautions. We would never take a person who tried to commit suicide and wanted to defect. This is an abnormality."

In intelligence work, however, second thoughts do arise. If Oswald's suicide attempt was superficial, as the Organs could ascertain from the medical reports, then other suspicions were ready to follow. Had Oswald been given an unorthodox agenda by American intelligence? Had he been dispatched to the Soviet Union as a man programmed to appear irresponsible? "These were questions we had to pose to ourselves, because improbable as were his actions, nonetheless American intelligence could have sent him over as a probe, a monitor, to see how we would react to such a curious stimulus. It was an improbable hypothesis but not to be entirely discarded. Oswald might be something new under the sun."

Under such circumstances, they decided, therefore, not to react but to observe. They would, for example, not seek to debrief him overtly, for that would send too simple a signal to the Americans. KGB had numerous sources for obtaining military information in Japan—it was highly unlikely, therefore, that they would lose anything of value by not moving quickly with Oswald.

However, General Marov did not exclude the possibility that one of their people in Moscow might have had direct talks with Oswald, but never as an official representative of the Organs. It could have been some officer with a cover story—in the guise of a Soviet reporter, for example. "But certainly no official debriefing. This is not only my opinion but my information."

In the actual event, he remarked, three Soviet journalists had gone to interview Oswald on separate occasions. One of them could have been a bona fide journalist who was also serving as a source, but the other two had come from Moscow Center, and their stories never appeared in any newspaper. A well-employed game in his service, Marov remarked, was to have all three ask the same questions; you could compare the target's varying answers as part of your evaluation.

Since Oswald spent much of his time with an Intourist girl, Marov confirms that she, too, would have been coached on what to ask him.

"Since she was young herself, and did not know as much about military and electronic units as would an expert, she was programmed each day, every day, with the next set of questions. Her case officer might ask for information on certain points, until she would come to understand more and more which kind of ques-

There was another option as well. If, in fact, a former Marine had become so deeply displeased with the capitalist system that he defected, then this might serve to demonstrate that life in America was not as agreeable as the U.S. media suggested. Since there was a special department for propaganda in Moscow Center, they too would have made an evaluation and that would have gone to the top of the Central Committee, up to Mikoyan.

Nonetheless, General Marov insisted that any differences between Counterintelligence and KGB's Propaganda Department would have been resolved without conflict. "The aim is to have an understanding. If two Generals sit together, we tend not to speak officially. One says, 'Look, what are we going to do with this guy Oswald?' 'Well, he's a mess.' 'Okay, agreed. Now, do we ship him back, or do we let him stay?—whichever we agree upon.' And, of course, we knew of Mikoyan's desire to keep him. That was a huge factor."

The proposition would have been seen as follows: On the side of taking him as a political immigrant for propaganda purposes, General Marov now said, in English: "Positive is that this young man has come to the paradise of working toilers, etcetera. But on our negative side—very hot coal in one's hand—very hot. Where do you throw it? You have to give him money, and some job, you have to watch him constantly, defend him from curious people. You have to decide whether he could become a source of future counterpropaganda against our Soviet Union because, of course, he could always go up to some Embassy or newspaper and start to tell stories about how bad it is in our provinces."

On the other hand, if you had to send him back to the States, that would also be negative. "After all, why did our country reject him? Our call in those years, successful or not, was to try to be very human, even in a high sense of the word. Under the circumstances, Minsk proved our viable compromise." Marov shrugged. His favorite proverb, after all, would tell you that "When a child has seven baby-sitters, it will lose an eye."

So Oswald was put in a bell-jar. His actions were studied, and the Organs knew their own kind of frustration when he proved to be a poor worker. If he had accommodated himself to the radio plant, their own activities could have focused on interesting alternatives: Either Oswald was sincere, or he was skillful enough to pretend to be sincere. Instead, he put his feet on the table.

We ought to know Oswald well enough by now to understand how demoralized he was by working in a radio factory. To labor collectively was the essence of anonymity. The finished product had more importance than his own person. He had not voyaged from the Marine Corps to the Soviet Union in order to become anonymous. If to work with no enthusiasm would attract more attention, then, indeed, he would put his feet on the table. He wishes to make his mark and keep making it. So, he dramatizes his presence by going to sleep.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations would later say of Oswald, "His return to the United States publicly testified to the utter failure of what had been the most important act of his life,"¹ but it is more likely that Oswald would still have been seeing himself as important in the scheme of things. Who else had manipulated the bureaucracies of the U.S. and the USSR to so much effect? He had done it, in fact, even better than he knew, for more than a few analysts in CIA believed it had all been stage-managed by Moscow Center because it would have been impossible for him to bring it off all by himself. It is staggering to recognize how mutually paranoid a view each superpower had in those days of the other. We can rely on this paranoia to affect a few actions in and around Oswald's life on his return to America.

But slowly. It happened slowly. CIA was as subtle, restrained, and as full of cautionary nuance as KGB when it came to dealing with their breakaway American.

~~_____~~
~~_____~~

Maternity House

Let us go back once again to April 1960, after Oswald had been in the Soviet Union no more than six months. At that time, the _____ John W. Fain was making his early inquiries in Texas:

Oswald and Marina in Minsk

July 15

Marina, at work, is shocked to find out [that] everyone knows she entered the U.S. Embassy. They were called at her place of work by some [Soviet] officials in Moscow. The bosses held a meeting and gave her a strong browbeating, the first of many indoctrinations.

TO: American Embassy, Moscow
July 15, 1961

Dear Sirs,

As per your instructions I am writing to inform you of the process and progress of our visas.

We have approached the local "OVIR" office and the results are not discouraging. However there have been some unusual and crude attempts on my wife at her place of work. While we were still in Moscow, the foremen at her place of work were notified that she and I went into the Embassy for the purpose of visas. Then there followed the usual "enemy of the people" meeting, in which, in her absence, she was condemned and her friends at work warned against speaking with her. However, these tactics are quite useless, and my wife stood up well, without getting into trouble.

We are continuing the process and will keep you informed as to the overall picture.

Sincerely yours,
Lee H. Oswald²

pp 211-16

Start →

FROM KGB TRANSCRIPTS
FOR OBJECT: OLH-2658
FOR PERIOD: 17 JULY 1961

[In these transcripts, OLH (Oswald, Lee Harvey) has been changed to LHO. Marina was always referred to as WIFE. Stepan underlined those speeches he considered pertinent to his needs, whereas any comments that appear in italics as stage directions were made by the KGB transcriber. That worthy was making his (or her) observations through a peephole in a rented room adjacent to the Oswalds' apartment.]

LHO: I can't tell you what to do. Do what you want to do. If you want, you can go with me.

212 / NORMAN MAILER

WIFE: I don't want to.

LHO: Why?

WIFE: I'm simply afraid.

LHO: Of course you're afraid.

WIFE: I don't know America, I only know Russia . . . You can go back to your own people . . . I don't know how things will be there. Where will you find work?

LHO: I'll find everything, everything. I'll do everything. That's my job.

WIFE: How will they treat me there?

(radio drowns out conversation; impossible to get in entirety)

FROM KGB TRANSCRIPTS

FOR OBJECT: OLIH-2658

FOR PERIOD: 19 JULY 1961

WIFE: All you know how to do is torture . . .

(LHO goes out; yells something from the kitchen)

WIFE: Go find yourself a girl who knows how to cook . . . I work, I don't have time to prepare cutlets for you. You don't want soup, you don't want kasha, just tasty tidbits, please!

LHO: I can go eat at a restaurant.

WIFE: Go to hell! When are you ever going to leave me alone? I'll probably never live to see the day when you leave me alone.

LHO: But you don't know how to do anything.

WIFE: Leave me alone!

She bumped into Misha Smolsky once on the street, and he asked her how she was doing with her man, and she answered, "Very difficult." Misha said, "If it is difficult, why did you jump into it?" She said, "No, he's not a bad guy, but food is very difficult." At that time, in shops there was a lot to buy, but what do people in Minsk eat, after all?—potatoes, pork fat, pickled cucumbers, pickled cabbage, beef, pork, mutton, turkey, goose. She wasn't able to buy food he would like. For instance, Alik would say, "I want to have corn," and any corn they grew around there

is

the livestock. So she said to Misha Smolsky, "Let's say we have *cultural* difficulties."

FROM KGB TRANSCRIPTS

OBJECT: OLH-2658

PERIOD: 21 JULY 1961

LHO: Well, why are you crying? *(pause)* I told you crying won't do any good.

(Wife cries)

You know, I never said that I was a very good person.

(Wife cries and LHO calms her down)

WIFE: *(through tears)* Why did I get married? You tricked me.

LHO: . . . You shouldn't cry. I understand, you don't understand yourself why.

WIFE: *(through tears)* My friends don't recognize me.

LHO: Well? I've also lost weight, right?

WIFE: *(cries)* Why did I get married?

LHO: Well, what am I supposed to do? Is it my fault that you have a lot of work? I mean, you don't ever cook, but other women cook. And I don't say anything about it. I don't yell. You never do anything and you don't want to do the wash. What do you do? The only thing you ever talk about is how tired you are at work.

WIFE: I didn't get any rest.

LHO: Well, what can I do?

(pause)

WIFE: Everything was so good, but lately everything has gotten bad, nothing's right. You can't please a man like you.

(they are silent)

Later that night

LHO: Well, what? This is ridiculous!

WIFE: I want to sleep, don't bother me! . . . You're so crude! I'm tired, I swear, I'm tired.

LHO: And what did you do that you're so tired? You didn't do any-
thing. You didn't cook anything.

WIFE: The cafeteria's good enough.

LHO: And who's going to wash the shirts, the socks?

WIFE: Everything's already washed, go and take a look. You'll leave and then you'll be unhappy alone, you'll see. So get off my back. What is it you want from me, anyway, what? For God's sake, just don't torture me. Soon enough you won't have me, and that's all there is to it.

(pause)

WIFE: You're laughing, but you'll cry later . . . (pause) I don't want to now. I'm tired.

LHO: What did you do that you're tired?

WIFE: Don't throw things around . . .

LHO: What can I do? (mocks Wife) "I don't want to!" Well, what can I say! We're going to be here four or five months anyway.

WIFE: I'll be here. Let the baby stay by itself.

LHO: Are you crazy!? (yells) You should be ashamed! A child without a father! You should be ashamed! (laughs) You're still my wife, you're going! And if I leave, I'll send you an invitation.

WIFE: You'll leave on your own.

LHO: You should be ashamed! You don't believe yourself what you're saying . . .

WIFE: I'm not going to promise. If I don't go then that's it.

LHO: You're my wife, you're going.

WIFE: No.

LHO: Why?

WIFE: I know why.

LHO: Well, why? You don't know yourself. There, you see. Do you know how many foreigners live there?

WIFE: They won't take me there, and they won't create the conditions for me, they won't create them. The American Embassy won't look after me.

LHO: Why do you think that? I mean, I wrote that I was obligating myself. [Note in left margin: "Obviously, he is obligating himself

to
↓

provide her with everything she needs in United States."] You ^{understand} ~~and~~ that you're my wife and that you're going with me. ^{When}
~~When I arrived here it was difficult for me too.~~

That is an entirely different matter.

But I'm obligating myself! I'll do everything.

(pause)

WIFE: You won't convince me.

(pause)

HIO: You're just stubborn.

WIFE: And you're always yelling. (radio drowns out conversation)

When Inessa met Lee Oswald, he seemed not exactly unfriendly, but very suspicious about things. They exchanged a few words and then he sat down in a chair and became completely occupied with some comic books his brother had sent him from America. Inessa spent her time chatting with Marina.

After a few more visits, however, Alik's suspicions began fading away. Before long, Inessa was eating with them in their kitchen. Indeed, she even liked it that he hadn't become open right away but had waited and observed. She thinks she probably wouldn't have believed him if, immediately, he had been too friendly. In fact, she liked him as a husband for Marina. He did all the man's work around their apartment without needing reminders. Which is not too often true of Russian men.

What she wasn't so comfortable with was that all of a sudden he would announce what he liked about the Soviet Union and what he didn't like, and he would do it in the open—never whispering. And there were other little things. She really couldn't say that she approved of him entirely, even if they were only small things. He would carry on if dinner wasn't cooked on time, and in her opinion, Marina didn't fit into his American standards of what a wife should be. When they had fights, Inessa saw them as children, one more stubborn than the other. She liked them both and was comfortable with both, and—maybe she was just lucky—in her presence they never had any really big arguments. She does remember that Marina would get irritated when Alik would read his American comic books and begin to laugh loudly. On the other hand, Marina thought he was too pedantic and told Inessa that she was dissatisfied with his mind.

X10 / NORMAN MAILER

He also had bad habits. Like a worker or a crude soldier. He ^{was} always spoiling the air with gases. That was shocking, and he did ^{it} as naturally as drinking water.

^{then} All the same, Inessa always felt that Alik was more calm ^{than} Marina. Outside of those gases, he was very organized. He liked perfection in everything, and Marina used to complain about this trait. Taken all together, Inessa never really thought that Marina was deeply in love with him. She thinks Alik loved her more.

FROM KGB TRANSCRIPTS

FOR OBJECT: OLV-2658

FOR PERIOD: 24 JULY 1961

21:20

WIFE: Alik! Look, I forgot to iron the bedsheets—there's one lying over there. Alik! Look how warm my ears are.

(they joke around; they laugh)

LHO: Not bad songs they're singing.

WIFE: There's some festival going on. Everyone's going to Moscow and people can say what they want. Before, you couldn't say anything: not on the street, not on the streetcar, not on the trolley. When Stalin was alive there was a microphone in every house and you couldn't say anything. Nowadays it's a different matter.

LHO: Yes, yes, my sister.

(end)

FROM KGB TRANSCRIPTS

FOR OBJECT: OLV-2658

FOR PERIOD: 26 JULY 1961

LHO: So, there was a meeting?

WIFE: Yes, there was a meeting.

LHO: Where?

WIFE: In our clinic.

(pause)

You see, they would have been satisfied if I had said, no, I'm not going, I won't leave [my] Motherland. Never tell them any truth. Really, I shouldn't have said anything at all. I should have said that my position was such that I don't know what to do.

LHO: And what did they say?

DREAD

1963 ✓

726

PP213-15

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 2

[REDACTED] *Existential*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Champions are prodigies of will—one of the elements which separates them from club fighters or contenders is an urge which carries them through crises other fighters are not willing to endure. Thus the chance is always present that a champion can be killed in the ring. This of course was the underlying theme in the first Patterson-Liston fight; its echoes appear throughout the piece.

The close relation of death to existential politics need not be forced. The formal argument is doubtless beyond one's means, but it could be said that just as matters such as conscience or moral decision make up intrinsic dilemmas for the language analysis of Anglo-American philosophy, so the reluctance of modern European existentialism to take on the logical continuation of the existential vision (that there is a life after death which can be as existential as life itself) has brought French and German existentialism to a halt on this uninhabitable terrain of the absurd—to wit, man must lead his life as if death is meaningful even when man knows that death is meaningless. This revealed knowledge which Heidegger accepts as his working hypothesis and Sartre goes so far as to assume is the certainty upon which he may build a philosophy, ends the possibility that ^{one} can construct a base for ^{the} existential ethic. The German philosopher runs aground trying to demonstrate the necessity for man to discover an authentic life. Heidegger can give no deeper explanation why man should bother to be authentic

than to state in effect that man should be authentic in order to be free. Sartre's advocacy of the existential commitment is always in danger of dwindling into the minor aristocratic advocacy of leading one's life with style for the sake of style. Existentialism is rootless unless one dares the hypothesis that death is an existential continuation of life, that the soul may either pass through migrations, or cease to exist in the continuum of nature (which is the unspoken intimation of cancer). But accepting this hypothesis, authenticity and commitment return to the center of ethics, for man then faces no peril so huge as alienation from his own soul, a death which is other than death, a disappearance into nothingness rather than into Eternity.

This idea is taken up in "Ten Thousand Words a Minute"; it comes to brief overt focus after the description of the Paret-Griffith fight, and for that matter is repeated with variations through many of the papers in this book. In the December column in Esquire there is a section not printed here in the Miscellany, which speaks of Dr. Robert A. Soblen's suicide. He was an elderly man convicted by America for espionage, but let out on bail during his appeal because he was dying of cancer. Jumping his bail, he escaped by airplane to Israel. Forbidden to enter that country, he tried on his enforced return to America to commit suicide in England.

He is condemned to go to jail for life, he is doomed to die of cancer, and yet, obviously dissatisfied with the notion that his fate is final, he makes two curious attempts at suicide.

Obviously there is a difference to him in the way he dies. He seems to have a mania not to die in an American jail. His instinct tells him to clear a space, to find a private place in which to die. But he expresses his instinct with the power of a major passion. It gives a hint of the secret. It suggests that the way we die, the style of our death, its condition, its mood, its witness, is not trivial. May it be that the way we die affects the direction in which our death may turn? Soblen is deep in cancer. Can it be that one can die profoundly deep in cancer or not nearly so deep?

We are apparently a light-year away from political preoccupations and yet it is a distance which must be traversed. In the Middle Ages man endured his life as a preparation for his death, and lived out this displacement so com-

pletely that life was in danger of perishing by famine, plague, and the untamed encroachments of nature. Modern man, in conquest of nature, chooses to ignore death and violate its logic. The result may be a destruction not only of life, but of Being, of our route from the world to Eternity and back again. A politics devoted exclusively to the immediate needs of society murders death as absolutely as theology once massacred the possibilities of life. (end)

Remember that old joke about three kinds of intelligence: human, animal, and military? Well, if there are three kinds of writers: novelists, poets, and *reporters*, there is certainly a gulf between the poet and the novelist; quite apart from the kind of living they make, poets invariably seem to be aristocrats, usually spoiled beyond repair; and novelists—even if they make a million, or have large talent—look to have something of the working class about them. Maybe it is the drudgery, the long, obsessive inner life, the day-to-day monotony of applying themselves to the middle of the same continuing job, or perhaps it is the business of being unappreciated at home—has anyone met a novelist who is happy with the rugged care provided by his wife?

Now, of course, I am tempted to round the image out and say reporters belong to the middle class. Only I do not know if I can push the metaphor. Taken one by one, it is true that reporters tend to be hardheaded, objective, and unimaginative. Their intelligence is sound but unexceptional and they have the middle-class penchant for collecting tales, stories, legends, accounts of practical jokes, details of negotiation, bits of memoir—all those capsules of fiction which serve the middle class as a substitute for ethics and/or culture. Reporters, like shopkeepers, tend to be worshipful of the fact which wins and so covers over the other facts. In the middle class, the remark, "He made a lot of money," ends the conversation. If you persist, if you try to point out that the money was made by digging through his grandmother's grave to look for oil, you are met with a middle-class shrug. "It's a question of taste whether one should get into the past," is the winning reply.

In his own person there is nobody more practical than a reporter. He exhibits the same avidity for news which a businessman will show for money. No bourgeois will hesitate to pick up a dollar, even if he is not fond of the man with whom he deals: so, a reporter will do a nice story about

From Prof. Pifer
pp 151-157

THE SEVEN PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES

729

1962-3

[REDACTED]

ON DREAD

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Locust Cry

[REDACTED]

It would not be worth saying ^{that} Freud had an umbilical respect for the meanings of anxiety and dread, if it were not that his epigones have reduced these concepts to little more than alarm bells and rattles of malfunction in a psychic machine. Anxiety and dread are treated by them as facts, as the clashing of gears in a neurotic act. The primitive understanding of dread—that one was caught in a dialogue with gods, devils, and spirits, and so was naturally consumed with awe, shame, and terror has been all but forgotten. We are taught that we feel anxiety because we are driven by unconscious impulses which are socially unacceptable; dread we are told is a repetition of infantile experiences of helplessness. It is induced in us by situations which remind our unconscious of weaning and other early deprivations. What is never discussed: the possibility that we feel anxiety because we are in danger of losing some part or quality of our soul unless we act, and act dangerously; or the likelihood that we feel dread when intimations of our death inspire us with disproportionate terror, a horror not merely because we are going to die, but to the contrary because we are going to die badly and suffer some unendurable stricture of eternity. These explanations are altogether outside the close focus of the psychological sciences in the Twentieth Century. Our century, at least our American Century, is a convalescent home for the shell-shocked veterans of a two-thousand-year-war—that huge struggle

within Christianity to liberate or to destroy the vision of man.

Faced with our failure (for it would seem the war has gone against us) the investigators of the intellect have taken to intellectual tranquilizers. It is logical positivism, ~~logicism~~ and language analysts who dominate Anglo-American philosophy rather than existentialists; it is Freudians instead of Reichians or Jungians who rule psychoanalysis; and it is journalism rather than art ~~which~~ ^{that} forges the apathetic conscience of our time. But then politics, like journalism, is intended to hide from us the existential abyss of dread, the terror which lies beneath our sedation. Today, a successful politician is not a man who wrestles with the art of the possible in order to enrich life, alleviate hardship, or correct injustice—he is, on the contrary, a doctor of mass communications who may measure his success by the practice of a political ritual and vocabulary which diverts us temporarily from dread, from anxiety, from the mirror of the dream. Here follow two specimens of those particular emotional states which politics is designed to conceal.

ev
lel

Th
by
eq
ur
hi
is
al
lo

cc

Responses and Reactions II

On p. 293 of *The Early Masters** is a short story.

The Test

It is told:

When Prince Adam Czartoryski, the friend and counselor of Czar Alexander, had been married for many years and still had no children, he went to the maggid of Koznitz and asked him to pray for him and because of his prayer the princess bore a son. At the baptism, the father told of the maggid's intercession with God. His brother who, with his young son, was among the guests, made fun of what he called the prince's superstition. "Let us go to your wonder-worker together," he said, "and I shall show you that he can't tell the difference between left and right."

Together they journeyed to Koznitz, which was close to where they lived. "I beg of you," Adam's brother said to the maggid, "to pray for my sick son."

* From Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*. Published by Schocken Books. Volume I: *The Early Masters*, Volume II: *The Later Masters*.

The maggid bowed his head in silence. "Will you do this for me?" the other urged.

The maggid raised his head. "Go," he said, and Adam saw that he only managed to speak with a great effort. "Go quickly, and perhaps you will still see him alive."

"Well, what did I tell you?" Adam's brother said laughingly as they got into their carriage. Adam was silent during the ride. When they drove into the court of his house, they found the boy dead.

What is suggested by the story is an underworld of real events whose connection is never absurd. Consider, in parallel, this Haiku: *

So soon to die
and no sign of it is showing—
locust cry.

The sense of stillness and approaching death is occupied by the cry of the locust. Its metallic note becomes the exact equal of an oncoming death. Much of Haiku can best be understood as a set of equations in mood. Man inserting himself into a mood extracts an answer from nature which is not only the reaction of the man upon the mood, but is a supernatural equivalent to the quality of the experience, almost as if a key is given up from the underworld to unlock the surface of reality.

Here for example is an intimation of the architecture concealed beneath:

Upsetting the Bowl †

It is told:

Once Rabbi Elimelekh was eating the Sabbath meal with his disciples. The servant set the soup bowl down before him. Rabbi Elimelekh raised it and upset it, so that the soup poured over the table. All at once young Mendel, later the rabbi of Rymanov, cried out: "Rabbi what are you doing? They will put us all in jail!" The other disciples smiled at these foolish words. They would have laughed out loud, had not the presence of their teacher restrained them. He, however, did not smile. He nodded to young Mendel and said: "Do not be afraid, my son!"

* *An Introduction to Haiku* by Harold G. Henderson, p. 43. The poem is by Matsuo Basho, translated by Henderson.

*Yagate shinu
keshiki wa mei-zo
semi-no koe*

† *The Early Masters*, p. 259.

Some time after this, it became known that on that day an edict directed against the Jews of the whole country had been presented to the emperor for his signature. Time after time he took up his pen, but something always happened to interrupt him. Finally he signed the paper. Then he reached for the sand-container but took the inkwell instead and upset it on the document. Hereupon he tore it up and forbade them to put the edict before him again.

A magical action in one part of the world creates its historical action in another—we are dealing with no less than totem and taboo. Psychoanalysis intrudes itself. One of the last, may it be one of the best approaches to modern neurosis is by way of the phenomenological apparatus of anxiety. As we sink into the apathetic bog of our possible extinction, so a breath of the Satanic seems to rise from the swamp. The magic of materials lifts into consciousness, proceeds to dominate us, is even enthroned into a usurpation of consciousness. The protagonists of *Last Year at Marienbad* are not so much people as halls and chandeliers, gaming tables, cigarettes in their pyramid of 1, 3, 5, and 7. The human characters are ghosts, disembodied servants, attendants who cast their shadows on the material. It is no longer significant that a man carries a silver cigarette case; rather it is the cigarette case which is significant. The man becomes an instrument to transport the case from the breast pocket of a suit into the air; like a building crane, a hand conducts the cigarette case to an angle with the light, fingers open the catch and thus elicit a muted sound of boredom, a silver groan from the throat of the case, which nows offers up a cigarette, snaps its satisfaction at being shut, and seems to guide the hand back to the breast pocket. The man, on leave until he is called again, goes through a pantomime of small empty activities—without the illumination of his case he is like all dull servants who cannot use their liberty.

That, one may suppose, is a proper portrait of Hell. It is certainly the air of the phenomenological novel. It is as well the neurotic in slavery to the material objects which make up the locks and keys of his compulsion.

But allow me a quick portrait of a neurotic. He is a sociologist, let us say, working for a progressive foundation, a disenchanted atheist ("Who knows—God may exist as some kind of thwarted benevolence"), a liberal, a social planner, a member of SANE, a logical positivist, a collector

of jokes about fags and beatniks, a lover of that large suburban land between art and the documentary. He smokes two packs of cigarettes a day: he drinks—when he drinks—eight or ten tots of blended whiskey in a night. He does not get drunk, merely cerebral, amusing, and happy. Once when he came home thus drunk, he bowed to his door and then touched his doorknob three times. After this, he went to bed and slept like a thief.

Two years later he is in slavery to the doorknob. He must wipe it with his fingertips three times each morning before he goes out. If he forgets to do this and only remembers later at work, his day is shattered. Anxiety bursts his concentration. His psyche has the air of a bombed city. In an extreme case, he may even have to return to his home. His first question to himself is whether someone has touched the knob since he left. He makes inquiries. To his horror he discovers the servant has gone out shopping already. She has therefore touched the knob and it has lost its magical property. Stratagems are now necessary. He must devote the rest of the day to encouraging the servant to go out in such a manner that he can open the door for her, and thus remove the prior touch of her hand.

Is he mad? the man asks himself. Later he will ask his analyst the same question. But he is too aware of the absurdity of his activities. He suffers at the thought of the work he is not accomplishing, he hates himself for being attached to the doorknob, he tries to extirpate its dominance. One morning he makes an effort to move out briskly. He does not touch the brass a second and third time. But his feet come to a halt, his body turns around as if a gyroscope were revolving him, his arm turns to the knob and pats it twice. He no longer feels his psyche is to be torn in two. Consummate relief.

Of course his analysis discloses wonders. He has been an only son. His mother, his father, and himself make three. He and his wife (a naturally not very happy marriage) have one child. The value of the trinities is considered dubious by the analyst but is insisted upon by the patient. He has found that he need touch the doorknob only once if he repeats to himself, "I was born, I live, and I die." After a time he finds that he does not have to touch the knob at all, or upon occasion, can use his left hand for the purpose. There is a penalty, however. He is obliged to be concerned with the number nine for the rest of the day. Nine sips

of water from a glass. A porterhouse steak consumed in nine bites. His wife to be kissed nine times between supper and bed. "I've kicked over an ant hill," he confesses to his analyst. "I'm going bugs."

They work in his cause. Two testes and one penis makes three. Two eyes and one nose; two nostrils and one mouth; the throat, the tongue, and the teeth. His job, his family, and himself. The door, the doorknob, and the act of opening it.

Then he has a revelation. He wakes up one morning and does not reach for a cigarette. There is a tension in him to wait. He suffers agonies—the brightest and most impatient of his cells seem to be expiring without nicotine—still he has intimations of later morning bliss, he hangs on. Like an infantryman coming up alive from a forty-eight hour shelling, he gets to his hat, his attaché case, and the doorknob. As he touches it, a current flows into his hand. "Stick with me, pal," says the message. "One and two keep you from three."

Traveling to the office in the last half hour of the subway rush, he is happy for the first time in years. As he holds to the baked enamel loop of the subway strap, his fingers curl up a little higher and touch the green painted metal above the loop. A current returns to him again. Through his fingertips he feels a psychic topography which has dimensions, avenues, signals, buildings. From the metal of the subway strap through the metal of the subway car, down along the rails, into the tunnels of the city, back to the sewer pipes and electric cables which surround the subway station from which he left, back to his house, and up the plumbing, up the steam pipe, up the hall, a leap through the air, and he has come back to the doorknob again. He pats the subway strap three times. The ship of his body will sink no further. "Today," thinks the sociologist, "I signed my armistice. The flag of Faust has been planted here."

But in his office he has palpitations. He believes he will have a heart attack. He needs air. He opens the window, leans out from the waist. By God, he almost jumped!

The force which drew him to touch the knob now seems to want to pull his chest through the window. Or is it a force opposed to the force which made him touch the doorknob? He does not know. He thinks God may be telling him to jump. That thwarted benevolent God. "You are swear-

ing allegiance to materials," says a voice. "Come back, son. It is better to be dead."

Poor man. He is not bold enough to be Faust. He calls his analyst.

"Now, for God's sake, don't do anything," says the analyst. "This is not uncommon. Blocked material is rising to the surface. It's premature, but since we've gotten into it, repetition compulsions have to do with omnipotence fantasies which of course always involve Almighty figures and totemic Satanistic contracts. The urge to suicide is not bona fide in your case—it's merely a symbolic contraction of the anxiety."

"But I tell you I almost went through the window. I felt my feet start to leave the floor."

"Well, come by my office then. I can't see you right now—trust me on this—I've got a girl who will feel I've denied her her real chance to bear children if I cut into her hour, she's had too many abortions. You know, she's touchy"—rare is the analyst who won't gossip a *little* about his patients, it seems to calm the other patients—"but I'll leave an envelope of tranquilizers for you on the desk. They're a new formula. They're good. Take two right away. Then two more this afternoon. Forget the nausea if it comes. Just side-effect. We'll get together this evening."

"Mind if I touch your doorknob three times?"

"Great. You've got your sense of humor back. Yes, by all means, touch it."

So soon to die
and no sign of it is showing—
locust cry.

The Big Bite—April, 1963

The rite of spring is in the odor of the air. The nerve of winter which enters one's nose comes a long far way like a scythe from the peak of mountains. To the aged it can feel like a miasma up from the midnight corridors of a

1963

736

KRASNER INT.

MASTURBATION

THE SIXTH PRESIDENTIAL PAPER

138-141

138

One of them is: How do you know beauty isn't absolute?
Q. Recently I referred in the *Realist* to Sonny Nunez, a dead prizefighter, and Sherri Finkbone, a pregnant woman, and I suggested that if she really wanted to get a legal abortion, she should just sign up for a boxing match—to point out the irony that it's legal to kill a man in the ring, but it's illegal to remove a fetus from a woman. Would you like to attack that comparison?

A. Ah, yes. Atrocious. I think that's taking a cheap advantage. In one case a man is killed who is able to defend himself. In the other, an embryo who may have voyaged through eternity to be born again is snuffed out because of his mother's cultural propensity for socially accepted drugs like the limb-killer thalidomide.

Q. Both incidents took place in Arizona, and I just felt it was a dramatic way—

A. If somebody takes a handful of shit and throws it against the wall at a party, that's dramatic, but it's distasteful. Your example is distasteful. You were appealing to the low emotions in your readers. You have a terrible responsibility in the *Realist*, because your readers have low emotions too. Just because nobody could find the sort of stuff that's printed in the *Realist* except in the *Realist*, there is a danger that the people who read the sheet are going to begin to think there's something superior about them, just from the sheer fact they're reading the *Realist*.

Q. Do you think you're something of a puritan when it comes to masturbation?

A. I think masturbation is bad.

Q. In relation to heterosexual fulfillment?

A. In relation to everything—orgasm, heterosexuality, to style, to stance, to be able to fight the good fight. I think masturbation cripples people. It doesn't cripple them altogether, but it turns them askew, it sets up a bad and often enduring tension. I mean has anyone ever studied the correlation between cigarette smoking and masturbation? Anybody who spends his adolescence masturbating, generally enters his young manhood with no sense of being a man. The answer—I don't know what the answer is—sex for adolescents may be the answer, it may not. I really don't know.

Q. But can't one kid start young with heterosexual relations and yet develop all the wrong kinds of attitudes—while

START

another kid will go through his adolescence masturbating and yet see the humor of it, see the absurdity of it, know it's temporary?

A. I wouldn't dream of laying down a law with no variation. But let me say it another way. At the time I was growing up, there was much more sexual repression than there is today. One knew sex was good and everything was in the way of it. And so one did think of it as one of the wars to fight, if not *the* war to fight—the war for greater sexual liberty.

Masturbation was one expression of that deprivation. No adolescent would ever masturbate, presumably, if he could have sex with a girl. A lot of adolescents masturbate because they don't want to take part in homosexuality.

Q. There are certain societies where masturbation—

A. All I'm talking about is the one society I *know*. I'll be damned if I'm going to be led around with a ring in my nose by anthropologists. ~~I mean the few I've known personally have always struck me as slightly absurd. They're like eccentrics in a comic English novel. I won't take any anthropologists as a god. I'm sure they don't know A hole from appetite about "certain societies."~~

But we were talking about masturbation as the result of sexual repression. I don't see any reason to defend it. If you have more sexual liberty, why the hell still defend masturbation?

One has to keep coming back to one notion: How do you make life? How do you *not* make life? You have to assume, just as a working stance, that life is probably good—if it isn't good, then our existence is such an absurdity that *any* action immediately becomes absurd—but if you assume that life is good, then you have to assume that those things which keep life from happening—which tend to make life more complex without becoming more useful, more stimulating—are bad.

Anything that tends to make a man a machine without giving him the power to increase the real life in himself is bad.

Q. Is it possible that you have a totalitarian attitude against masturbation?

A. I wouldn't say all people who masturbate are evil, probably I would even say that some of the best people in the world masturbate. But I am saying it's a miserable activity.

Q. Well, we're getting right back now to this notion of absolutes. You know—to somebody, masturbation can be a thing of beauty—

A. To what end? To what end? Who is going to benefit from it?

Q. It's a better end than the beauty of a bombing.

A. Masturbation is bombing. It's bombing oneself!

Q. I see nothing wrong if the only person hurt from masturbation is the one who practices it. But it can also benefit—look, Stekel wrote a book on autoeroticism, and one of the points he made was that at least it saved some people who might otherwise go out and commit rape. He was talking about extremes, but—

A. It's better to commit rape than masturbate. Maybe, maybe. The whole thing becomes very difficult.

Q. But rape involves somebody else. The minute you—

A. Just talking about it on the basis of violence: one is violence toward oneself; one is violence toward others. And you don't recognize—let's follow your argument and be speculative for a moment—if everyone becomes violent toward themselves, then past a certain point the entire race commits suicide. But if everyone becomes violent toward everyone else, you would probably have one wounded hero-monster left.

Q. And he'd have to masturbate.

A. That's true . . . But—you use that to point out how tragic was my solution, which is that he wins and still has to masturbate. I reply that at least it was more valuable than masturbating in the first place. Besides he might have no desire to masturbate. He might lie down and send his thoughts back to the root of his being.

Q. I think there's a basic flaw in your argument. Why are you assuming that masturbation is violence unto oneself? Why is it not pleasure unto oneself? And I'm not defending masturbation—well, I'm defending masturbation, yes, as a substitute if and when—

A. All right, look. When you make love, whatever is good in you or bad in you, goes out into someone else. I mean this literally. I'm not interested in the biochemistry of it, the electromagnetism of it, nor in how the psychic waves are passed back and forth, and what psychic waves are. All I know is that when one makes love, one changes a woman slightly and a woman changes you slightly.

Q. Certain circumstances can change one for the worse.

A. But at least you have gone through a process which is part of life.

One can be better for the experience, or worse. But one has experience to absorb, to think about, one has literally to digest the new spirit which has entered the flesh. The body has been galvanized for an experience of flesh, a declaration of the flesh.

If one has the courage to think about every aspect of the act—I don't mean think mechanically about it, but if one is able to brood over the act, to dwell on it—then one is *changed* by the act. Even if one has been *jangled* by the act. Because in the act of restoring one's harmony, one has to encounter all the reasons one was jangled.

So finally one has had an experience which is nourishing. Nourishing because one's able to *feel* one's way into more difficult or more precious insights as a result of it. One's able to live a tougher, more heroic life if one can digest and absorb the experience.

But, if one masturbates, all that happens is, everything that's beautiful and good in one, goes up the hand, goes into the air, is *lost*. Now what the hell is there to *absorb*? One hasn't tested himself. You see, in a way, the heterosexual act lays questions to rest, and makes one able to build upon a few answers. Whereas if one masturbates, the ability to contemplate one's experience is disturbed. Instead, fantasies of power take over and disturb all sleep.

If one has, for example, the image of a beautiful sexy babe in masturbation, one still doesn't know whether one can make love to her in the flesh. All you know is that you can violate her in your *brain*. Well, a lot of good that is.

But if one has fought the good fight or the evil fight and ended with the beautiful sexy dame, then if the experience is good, your life is changed by it; if the experience is not good, one's life is also changed by it, in a less happy way. But at least one knows something of what happened. One has something real to build on.

The ultimate direction of masturbation always has to be insanity.

Q. But you're not man enough to take the other position, which is sex for the young. Except for petting, what else is there between those two alternatives?

A. I'd say, between masturbation and sex for the young, I prefer sex for the young. Of course. But I think there may be still a third alternative: At the time I grew up, sex had

That ill
whose
first
symptom
is
a
monotony
of nights

1963 ✓

B202

Q. 27:
↓

741

KRASSNER INT.

132 133

132

THE SIXTH PRESIDENTIAL PAPER

A. I've found that most women like "The Time of Her Time" for some reason. Men tend to get touchy about it. They feel—is Mailer saying this is the way he makes love? Is he this good or is he this bad? Is he a phony? Is he advertising himself? Does he make love better than me? To which I say they're asses.

Q. Oh, so you're hostile toward men!

A. I'm hostile to men, I'm hostile to women, I'm hostile to cats, to poor cockroaches, I'm afraid of horses. You know.

Q. Several months ago I mentioned, in order to make a very definite point, a Cuban prostitute—this was the first prostitute I'd ever gone to, and I had been asking her all these questions about the Revolution—and she stopped later in the middle of fellatio to ask me if I was a Communist.

A. You were in Cuba at the time?

Q. Yes. And she was anti-Castro.

A. Because he was cleaning them out of the whorehouses?

Q. Well, there were no more tourists coming to Cuba, and it was ruining their business. Anyway, I described this incident in the Realist, and was accused of exhibitionism by some friends of mine. And I'm secure enough in my life that I had no need to boast about this; but it was a funny, significant thing which I wanted to share with the readers.

A. Oh, I remember that, I remember reading your piece now. I was a little shocked by it.

Q. You're kidding.

A. No, I was shocked. I wasn't profoundly shocked. It threw me slightly. I had a feeling, "That's not good writing." And the next thought was, "Mailer, you're getting old." And the next thought was, "If you're not really getting old, but there is something indeed bad about this writing, what is it that's bad about it?"

Q. And?

A. A whore practicing fellatio looks up and says, "Are you a Communist?"—that's what the modern world is all about in a way. Saying it head-on like that probably gave the atmosphere honesty. But, in some funny way, it didn't belong. I don't want to start talking like a literary buff, because I dislike most literary language, Hemingway's perhaps most of all (it was so arch), but still in a way a good writer is like a pitcher, and a reader is happy when he feels like a good batter facing a good pitcher. When the ball comes in, he gets that lift.

But writing it the way you did, Krassner, you were in

effect hitting fungoes. You were making the reader field it, which is less agreeable than batting. If the reader had been able to guess that this was what was going on with the whore—I don't know how you could have done it; that would have been the art of it—to phrase the language in such a way that the reader thinks, "Oh, Jesus, she's sucking his cock, and she asks him if he's a Communist." If it had happened that way, it might have been overpowering. What a montage.

Maybe it was the use of "fellatio," maybe you just should have said, "I was having my cock sucked and she said, 'Are you a Communist?'" If you're getting into the brutality of it, get into the brutality of it. Throw a beanball. Don't use the Latinism. Maybe it was the Latinism that threw me. All I know is that there was something bad about it, the effect was *shock*.

Q. So you were shocked by a euphemism . . .

A. Shock is like banging your head or taking a dull fall; your wits are deadened.

Q. That's what I wanted to do in the writing, because that's what happened to me in the act.

A. Then you're not interested in art, you're interested in therapy. That's the trouble—there are too many people writing nowadays who give no art to the world, but draw in therapy to themselves.

Q. No, not in my case. It didn't change me one way or the other, writing it. I just wanted to put it into the consciousness of the reader. That's not therapy for me.

A. Well, then you should've said, "She was sucking my cock." I mean that's my professional opinion.

~~*Q. It wasn't in Roger's thesis. I mean, I think that you have an essentially biological approach to history?*~~

~~A. I think I do, but I could never talk about it. I don't know enough history.~~

~~*Q. To narrow it down to the present, if you were a future historian of sex, how would you look upon the Kennedy administration?*~~

~~A. I'd say there's more acceptance of sexuality in America today than there was before he came in. Whether that's good or bad, I don't know. It may be a promiscuous acceptance of sexuality.~~

~~*Q. Are you saying it's because of . . . ?*~~

~~A. Because of Kennedy—absolutely. I mean, just think of going to a party given by Eisenhower as opposed to a party~~

Sept-Oct 63

(713)

Oswald's file
PP 633-640

Kennedy, Castro and Oswald

~~happened to him at the Russian Embassy in Mexico, and it comes from a book written by a KGB man who was on the premises.~~

Sept-Oct '63

743

Oswald's Tale
pp 633-641

5

The KGB-Mexico

The bus on which Oswald was traveling from Laredo to Mexico City arrived, we can remind the reader, at 10:00 A.M. on Friday, September 27, 1963, and Oswald, carrying his duffle bag and a small hand bag with all his valuable papers, looked into the rates at a number of hotels before settling on the Hotel del Comercio, which cost, room with bath, \$1.28 a day.

Then he went over to the Cuban Embassy. There is every reason to believe he was confident the Cubans would give him a visa, since he had certainly established his credentials as a supporter of Castro. He had newspaper clippings to show his arrest, he had the stationery of the FPCC chapter he had formed in New Orleans, receipts for the money he had spent on pamphlets to distribute, and if any Castro supporters had heard him on the radio with Bill Stuckey, he would obtain the advantage of having his claims confirmed by other parties.

The first person he met at the Cuban Embassy was a woman named Silvia Duran, who spoke English. She listened to Oswald for a full fifteen minutes. Posner gives a good description based on the testimony of the Consul, Eusebio Azcue, before the HSCA:

... [Oswald] proceeded to tell her he was going to the USSR but that on the way he wanted a transit visa to stop in Cuba, for at least two weeks. He then began placing documents on her desk, each accompanied with a short explanation ... [and said] that he wanted to leave by September 30, only three days later ... Duran, an admitted Marxist, took a liking to Oswald ... [and she] called on Eusebio Azcue to see if he might expedite the process for the young American.¹

744
Azcue told him that he could not rush matters since he had to get authorization from the Cuban government in Havana. Moreover, Oswald would have to fill out an application and obtain five passport-size photographs. When Lee came back from that errand and completed his application, he learned that the best way to expedite his visa was to obtain permission at the Russian Embassy to visit the USSR.

Oswald was visibly upset at the hurdles looming before him and began to protest. As a friend of Cuba, he ought to be able to obtain a visa immediately. Azcue replied that he could be given a fifteen-day permission for visiting Cuba, but only after obtaining a Soviet visa. Or he could go through the normal channels, which would take several weeks in Mexico. Oswald replied that he did not have several weeks, and soon they were in a dispute that grew so loud that another official, Alfredo Mirabel Diaz, came out of his office to witness it.

Oswald then took off for the first of his two visits to the Soviet Embassy, which, conveniently, was no more than a couple of blocks away. For years, these two visits to the Russians have been a source of confusion or of obfuscation: The CIA kept a camera watch in a building across from the entry gate to the Soviet compound, yet CIA files have never produced a picture of Oswald entering or leaving the gate. The unadmitted likelihood is that the CIA certainly did have surveillance photos of Oswald entering the Russian Embassy and they were lifted from the Agency file after the assassination; indeed, this is to be expected if Oswald had attracted CIA attention after the Walker affair.

In any event, we can now be all but certain that it was Oswald who did visit the Russian Embassy and spoke there to three KGB agents who were doubling as consular officials. One of them, Oleg Nechiporenko, has written a book, *Passport to Assassination*, which tells of the two meetings in considerable detail.

Oswald arrived at the Soviet Embassy gate at twelve-thirty that afternoon, and waited in the reception area until one of the consulate employees, Valery Vladimirovich Kostikov, came out, listened to his request for a visa, glanced at the man's papers, and heard him say "that he was under constant surveillance in the United States by the FBI and . . . wanted to return to the USSR."

Kostikov had a meeting to take care of, and this fellow was hardly a run-of-the-mill subject. His visit was obviously going to take time. So, Kostikov called his colleague Oleg Maximovich Nechiporenko to the phone.

745

Listen, some gringo is here, Kostikov said . . . He's asking for a visa to the Soviet Union. Supposedly he already lived there, married one of our girls. They live in the States, but the FBI is harassing them. Come over here and get to the bottom of this. It seems to be more in your line of work. I'm in a hurry.³

Nechiporenko then adds:

As I approached the small building that housed the consular division, I saw a stranger, apparently twenty-five to twenty-seven years old, standing on the steps and leaning against the doorpost . . . He seemed to be looking beyond me, absorbed in his thoughts, and did not even react as I approached him. He was clad in a light jacket, a sport shirt with an unbuttoned collar, and either gray or brown slacks that were wrinkled. I greeted the stranger with a nod. He responded in kind.⁴

Kostikov, who shared an office with Nechiporenko, made the introductions and left. Oswald and Oleg were now in the same room, and the American, being invited to sit down, did so and began to talk in a state of considerable agitation. He looked exhausted.

Once again, Oswald took out his papers, complained about the FBI, and said he had come to Mexico to obtain visas to two countries—Cuba, to visit, and then the USSR, for a permanent return.

I silently cursed Valery for "transferring" him to me and decided that it was time to bring this meeting to a close. I had more important items in my agenda. I explained to Oswald that, in accordance with our rules, all matters dealing with travel to the USSR were handled by our embassies or consulates in the country in which a person lived. As far as his case was concerned, we could make an exception and give him the necessary papers to fill out, which we would then send on to Moscow, but the answer would still be sent to his permanent residence, and it would take, at the very least, four months.

Oswald listened intently to my explanation, but it was clear from his gestures and the expression on his face that he was disappointed and growing increasingly annoyed. When I had finished speaking, he slowly leaned forward and, barely able

to restrain himself, practically shouted in my face, "This won't do for me! This is not my case! For me, it's all going to end in tragedy!"

I shrugged my shoulders and stood up, signaling the end of our meeting. Oswald's hands shook as he put the documents back into his jacket. I led Oswald through the reception area and showed him the way out of the compound. He departed, obviously dissatisfied with the results of our talk. He appeared to be extremely agitated. This was how Oswald's first visit to our embassy in Mexico ended.⁵

Later that day, however, Nechiporenko began to think about the American who had come by that morning in such a state of tension about the FBI.

What guided us most of all—and I do not think I am mistaken in assuming it was the same for all intelligence services—in working with such foreigners was the principle of "fifty-fifty." This meant that the probability of obtaining a source of good, possibly even valuable, information was equal to the probability that the source was a "plant," that is, a trap set by the enemy with unpredictable consequences.

As I thought about that day's visitor and weighed the criteria of one "fifty" against another, I came to the conclusion that he fit neither category, meaning that he did not have any interest for us . . . It was perfectly clear that our internal counterintelligence back home had already studied him. Now that he was under FBI surveillance, let him be their headache, I thought.⁶

In the evening, Nechiporenko, relaxing with Kostikov at a Mexican cantina, was told by him of a call from Silvia Duran. Oswald had gone back to see the Cubans and told them that the Soviets had promised him a visa, so Silvia Duran was interested in checking. Kostikov had corrected her impression. Now, for a little while, over their mugs of beer, they discussed Oswald. Being young themselves and in fine shape physically, they found it agreeable to debate whether the man was schizoid in personality or merely neurotic.

It is probably fair to say that the physical appearance of Kostikov and Nechiporenko was Mexican. They had been serving in Mexico City long enough to have grown full mustaches, and both men

747
were dark. Perhaps they had cultivated their appearance. It is an advantage for an intelligence officer to look like a native, and to some degree they may even have begun to think like Mexicans—which will have its bearing on an extraordinary episode that takes place the following morning, Saturday, when Oswald returns to the Soviet Embassy.

Kostikov, Nechiporenko, and their immediate superior, Yatskov, were stars of the Soviet diplomats' volleyball team. A "serious match" was scheduled for that same Saturday morning against a team composed of military intelligence personnel—GRU.⁷

It is one of the ironies surrounding Oswald's trip to Mexico that on this important day in his life, when he reenters the Soviet Embassy to attempt to convince these Soviet officials that he should, given his qualifications, be granted a quick visa, their minds are elsewhere. His presence in their office only serves to make them late for the game.

Pavel Yatskov, who was first to arrive at his desk that Saturday morning, was relieved when Kostikov joined him inasmuch as the stranger who had just come in for an interview was speaking in English—which Yatskov barely understood. Kostikov would later describe the scene to Nechiporenko. It is worth following at some length:

I flung open the door to the first office, and there I saw Pavel sitting at his desk, and at the attached desk to his right, his back to the window, was the American who visited us the previous day. He was disheveled, rumpled, and unshaven. He had the look of someone who was hounded and he was much more anxious than the day before. I greeted him, and he nodded in response. Pavel also seemed tense. He turned to me and said, "Listen, help me out. I don't fully understand what it is he wants." . . . At this point, Oswald, on his own initiative . . . reported that he had . . . traveled to the Soviet Union as a tourist, where he had remained for political reasons, and had lived for a while in Belorussia, where he married a Russian and returned to the United States. He even dropped some hints that he had supposedly carried out a secret mission. He announced that he was a Communist and a member of an organization that defended Cuba. Pavel interrupted his monologue and said, since he had been in the Soviet Union, lived and worked there, that he could probably explain himself in Russian and looked at him disapprovingly. Without

748

answering, he switched over to broken Russian, in which the rest of the conversation was conducted . . .

While telling his story, Oswald again, as he had the day before, tried to support it by showing various documents . . . [and] repeated his desire to quickly obtain a visa to the USSR . . . He said he was motivated by the fact that it was very difficult for him to live in the United States, that he was constantly under surveillance, even persecuted, and that his personal life was being invaded and his wife and neighbors interrogated. He lost his job because the FBI had been around his place of employment asking questions. In recounting all this, he continually expressed concern for his life.

In his words, he dreamed of returning to his former job in the Soviet Union and living quietly there with his family. He spoke with noticeable warmth about his wife and child.

Throughout his story, Oswald was extremely agitated and clearly nervous, especially whenever he mentioned the FBI, but he suddenly became hysterical, began to sob, and through his tears cried, "I am afraid . . . they'll kill me. Let me in!" Repeating over and over that he was being persecuted and that he was being followed even here in Mexico, he stuck his right hand into the left pocket of his jacket and pulled out a revolver, saying, "See? This is what I must now carry to protect my life," and placed the revolver on the desk where we were sitting opposite one another.

I was dumbfounded, and looked at Pavel, who had turned slightly pale but then quickly said to me, "Here, give me that piece." I took the revolver from the table and handed it to Pavel. Oswald, sobbing, wiped away the tears. He did not respond to my movements. Pavel, who had grabbed the revolver, opened the chamber, shook the bullets into his hand, and put them in a desk drawer. He then handed the revolver to me, and I put it back on the desk. Oswald continued to sob, then pulled himself together and seemed indifferent to what we had done with his weapon. Pavel poured Oswald a glass of water and handed it to him. Oswald took a sip and placed the glass in front of him.⁸

At this point, Oleg Nechiporenko, suited up in shorts for volleyball, knocked on the door to summon the others and then opened it to come in. They were already late for the game.

But now, of course, there was no question of that. Not with the revolver on the table. Nechiporenko closed the door again. Afterward, Yatskov would tell Nechiporenko:

749

... his eyes were wet with tears, and his hands shook ... I began to console him, saying that it might seem terrible to him, [but] the reasons for his being victimized were not immediately evident [to us]. Valery repeated a few of my sentences in English. Regarding his visa to the Soviet Union, we explained our rules once again, but in view of his condition, I offered him the necessary forms to be filled out. [Then in] response to his persistent requests that we recommend that the Cubans give him a visa, as an alternative to obtaining our visa, we told him that Cuba was a sovereign nation and decided visa questions for itself ...

Oswald gradually calmed down ... [and] did not take the forms we offered him. His state of extreme agitation had now been replaced by depression. He looked disappointed and extremely frustrated. Valery and I exchanged glances and let it be known that the subject of this conversation had been exhausted and that it was time to break it up. I rose from the table. Oswald got up from his chair, and simultaneously grabbed the revolver and stuck it somewhere under his jacket, either in a pocket or in his belt. Turning to Valery, he once again said something about being followed. I bent down to get the bullets from the desk drawer. I then handed them to Oswald, who dropped them into a pocket of his jacket. We said good-bye with a nod of our heads. Valery also stood, calmly opened the door leading into the reception area, and after letting him go first, followed right behind him ...⁹

Here, Oleg, who has apparently opened the door again, now overlaps Yatskov's account with his own:

At that moment I distinctly heard Oswald say that he was afraid to return to the United States—where he would be killed. "But if they don't leave me alone, I'm going to defend myself." Valery confirms these were Oswald's words.

It was said without mentioning anyone in particular. At the time this phrase meant nothing to us. What happened to him in his own country was his problem. We recalled these words

only on that fateful November twenty-second. When I led Oswald out of the reception area into the courtyard and showed him the way to the gate, he pulled his head down, and raised the collar of his jacket to conceal his face and thus attempt to avoid being clearly photographed . . .¹⁰

Recently, Nechiporenko was asked by this book's interviewers how it was possible that a responsible KGB man would give back not only a gun but its bullets to someone as disturbed in appearance as Oswald. Nechiporenko shrugged. It had happened, he said. He could not speak for why. Yatskov had done it, but it did not seem exceptional at the time.

"If this same episode had taken place in London, would any of you have returned the bullets?"

"Never," said Nechiporenko.

That gave some purchase for believing this story. It could be proposed that these three KGB men had served in Mexico long enough to feel that it was wrong to deprive a man of his gun. That, by the Mexican logic of the *cantinas*, was equal to emasculation, and to a Mexican no act could be considered more heinous.

"All right," he was asked, "one can understand giving back the gun. But the bullets! What if Oswald had reloaded his gun on the way out and shot the first person he encountered on the street? And then said, 'The Russians gave me the bullets?'"

Nechiporenko shook his head. It had happened the way it happened, he said, and perhaps you had to be there to believe it. They just had not been afraid that this man Oswald would go out in the street and cause trouble with his gun.

They would never admit it, but perhaps they did think that he might need a weapon to defend himself against the FBI. After all, how many FBI men in the same situation would not believe that a Russian defector would need his bullets returned in order to defend himself against the KGB?

Or, if we are to muse upon Yatskov's motive, perhaps he did not wish to create a situation where Oswald could go to the American Embassy in Mexico City and claim that the Soviets were holding some of his property. The fellow might be a skilled provocateur.

In any event, the three officers never got to the volleyball game that day against the GRU. Yatskov, Kostikov, and Nechiporenko were busy filing a coded cable to Moscow Center that described the meeting with Oswald. Since their team lost to the GRU, they felt guilty.

...

On that wholly frustrating Saturday morning, Oswald next went from the Soviet compound down the street to the Cuban Embassy and ran into another quarrel with the Consul, Eusebio Azcue:

Posner: Oswald again demanded that he be issued a visa because of his political credentials, but the consul repeated it was impossible without a Russian visa . . . "I hear him make statements that are directed against us," recalled Azcue, "and he accuses us of being bureaucrats, and in a very discourteous manner. At that point I also become upset and I tell him to leave the consulate, maybe somewhat violently or emotionally." He told Oswald that "a person like him, instead of aiding the Cuban revolution, was doing it harm." Azcue moved toward Oswald, prepared to force him physically out of the embassy. "Then he leaves the consulate," recalled Azcue, "and he seems to be mumbling to himself, and slams the door, also in a very discourteous mood. That was the last time we saw him around."¹¹

It is painful to think of Oswald walking down the street, his documents in his ditty bag. All his striving had gone into collecting those documents, yet no one had been stirred by his deeds.

On Sunday, he went to a bullfight and on Monday he called Nechiporenko one more time. Had there been any affirmative word from Moscow on his application for a visa? None, replied Nechiporenko.

Oswald went to the bus terminal and bought a ticket home. If, once in 1959 and again in 1962, he had prevailed against the giant bureaucracies of the Soviet Union and the United States, he could no longer maintain the luster of that achievement.

On Wednesday, he departed from Mexico City at eight-thirty in the morning. In something like thirty hours, he was back in Dallas. He did not call Marina at Ruth Paine's house in Irving, but instead took a room at the Y and, presumably, he slept alone with his arms around the ash-heap of his plans.

Nov-23, 1963

(752)

(Oswald's Talk
1243-1248)

The Six Time-Zones Between Dallas and Davis

36 | Cubela, wearing a tan sport jacket and brown pants, came into the Bistro de la Mairie accompanied by a man in a blue yachting jacket, gray flannels, and horn-rimmed glasses—LYME—who nodded to us and walked out. But for three workmen standing at the bar by the entrance, we had the place to ourselves, all of the dark floor, dark walls, round bar tables, and one disinterested waiter.

Cubela walked toward us like a heavyweight coming into the ring. My father had described him as tall, but he was heavier than I had expected and his mustache was full, powerful, and pessimistic. He would have been a good-looking man if his face had not been puffy from drink.

"Mr. Scott," said Cubela to my father, who promptly replied, "Señor General, this is Mr. Edgar." I nodded.

Cubela sat down with solemn grace. He would have an Armagnac, he decided. We said no more until the waiter brought it, whereupon Cubela took a taste and asked in a heavy Spanish accent, "*Il n'y a rien de mieux?*" to which our waiter allowed that it was the brand of Armagnac the café served. Cubela nodded in displeasure, and waved him away.

"You have brought the letter?" he asked. Cal nodded. "I would like to see it, Mr. Scott." His English was superior to his French.

The letter was brief, but composed by us with no small care. One of the experts at GHOUL had forged the handwriting on stationery that carried the embossed seal of the Attorney General's office.

November 20, 1963

This is to assure the bearer that in recognition of his successful efforts to bring about a noteworthy and irreversible change in the present government of Cuba, the powers of this office, and all collateral loyalties attendant thereto, will be brought to bear in full support of his high political aims.

Robert F. Kennedy

Cubela read it over, took out a pocket English dictionary, looked up the definition of several words, and frowned. "This letter does not fulfill the understanding arrived at in our last meeting, Mr. Scott."

"I would say it takes care of your specific requests completely, Señor General. You need only contemplate the meaning of 'irreversible change.'"

"Yes," said Cubela, "that addresses half of the fundamental understanding, but where does it say that the older brother of the signatory is well disposed toward me?"

Cal took back the letter and read aloud, "'The power of this office and *all collateral loyalties attendant thereto . . .*' I think you will find that is a clear reference to the sibling."

"Sibling? Sibling?"

"*El hermano*," I said.

"It is very abstract. In effect, you ask me to accept your promise on faith."

"Even as we accept your promises," said Cal.

Cubela showed small pleasure in being overtaken. "Whether you trust me or not, you will go back to your home in Washington. For me to trust you, however, means that I must risk my life." He withdrew a magnifying glass from his jacket pocket, and a clipping from a magazine. I could see that it was a printed sample of Robert Kennedy's handwriting.

For several minutes, Cubela compared the script in the letter to the sample in his clipping. "Good," he said at last, and stared carefully at both of us. "I would ask you a question, Mr. Scott. As you know, I once shot a man in a nightclub. In fact, I assassinated him."

"I thought you detest the word."

"I do. And now," he said in Spanish, "I will explain why. It is not because of some fracture of my nervous system that is unable to bear the enunciation of such syllables because that might recall to me the expression on a dying man's face—no, that is what my detractors would claim, but no truth is there. I am a calm man possessed of *pundonor*. I have depth of resolve. I see myself as the future *comandante* of the tragic island that is my nation. For these reasons, I detest the word. The assassin, you see, not only destroys his victim but the part of himself that contains his larger ambitions. Can you ask me to believe that the

President of the United States and his brother are ready to help the political career of a man whom they must talk about during the privacy of their own councils as a half-crazy hired thug?"

"In a time of turmoil," said Cal, "your past will matter less than your heroism. It is your heroic actions in the next few months that will bring you to public view."

"Are you saying that your sponsors will accept me in such circumstances?"

"That is exactly what I am saying."

He sighed heavily. "No," he said, "you are saying that at the summit of the mountain, there are no guarantees."

Cal was silent. After a while, he said, "As a man of intelligence, you know that one cannot control political weather absolutely."

"Yes," said Cubela, "I must be prepared to take all chances. Of necessity. Yes, I am prepared," he said, and let out his breath with such a burst that I realized he was ready to perform the assassination today. "Let us concern ourselves with equipment," he said.

"The telescope is ready," stated my father.

"You are speaking, I presume, of the rifle I have described that has a range of accuracy up to five hundred yards, equipped with a Bausch and Lomb telescopic sight of two and one-half times magnification?"

My father, in reflex, tapped on his glass through the length of this speech. Then he reached forward across the table, put his hand on Cubela's arm, and nodded profoundly, although he did not say a word.

"I will accept your concern for precautions," said Cubela. "Forgive me. Now, may I inquire into delivery?"

"Mr. Lyme will service your location."

"I like Mr. Lyme," said Cubela.

"I am pleased to hear that he is likeable," said Cal.

"The telescope will fit into an attaché case?"

"No," said Cal, but added "do you play pool?"

"Billiards."

"The case we will hand over to you looks like the kind that is used to carry a billiard cue. The kind of cue, of course, that comes in two pieces."

"Excellent," said Cubela. "And the other detail?"

"Yes," said Cal. "The piece of sophisticated equipment. The surprise. I have it on my person."

"May I see it?"

Cal removed a ballpoint pen from his tweed jacket and clicked the button. A hypodermic needle sprang forth. He clicked the button a second time and a thread of liquid darted from the needle like a wall lizard's tongue. "It's only water," said Cal, "but this pen has been designed for use with the common reagent . . ." He removed an index card from his pocket and held it up. It read: BLACKLEAF 40.

"Where do I find such as that?" asked Cubela.

"In any chemical supply house. It is a common reagent employed for insects."

"Of all sizes?"

Cal nodded again. "Most effective."

Cubela took the ballpoint pen and pressed the button several times until all the water had been ejected. "It is a toy," he said with some petulance.

"No," answered Cal, "it is a sophisticated instrument. The needle is so fine that one does not feel it entering the skin."

"You are asking me to walk up to the subject and inject him?"

"The needle is so fine that it causes no pain. It attracts no attention whatsoever."

Cubela looked at both of us with contempt. "Your gift is a device for a woman. She sticks her tongue in the man's mouth and puts the needle in his back. I am not about to use such tactics. It is shameful to eliminate one's enemy in that manner. One does not attack a serious Cuban with a hat pin. I would be subject to ridicule. And rightly so."

He stood up. "I will accept the carrying case with the billiard cue from Mr. Lyme. But this I reject." He was about to depart, then stopped. "No," he said, "I will take reception of it after all," and he put it in his breast pocket.

My father surprised me by his next remark. "For yourself?" he asked.

He nodded. "If the large effort fails, I have no wish to live through the immediate consequences."

"*Cómo no*," said Cal.

Cubela shook his hand, then mine. His hands were cold. "Salud!" he said, and walked out.

"We'll get the billiard cue to him in Veradero," said Cal. "He has a little villa on the beach, three hundred yards away from the beach house that the subject—as he calls him—inhabits on vacation. I hate to say it, but I am getting my hopes up for this fellow. He could deliver a present before Christmas." Cal let out his breath. "Do you mind paying the bill? I need to take a walk." He paused. "We should leave separately in any event."

"All right," I said. "I'll follow you back to the hotel."

Through the café window, I could see the lights on the street. The November evening had long passed, and at 7:00 P.M. it was now dark enough for midnight.

I did not know exactly how I felt, but then I was not in a situation where it was automatic to comprehend one's reactions. In truth, I wanted Rolando Cubela to kill Fidel Castro; I hoped that Helms, Harlot, and Cal were not merely sending out a provocation to the DGI. No, I wanted an execution to be there at the end of the road. I did not begin to have the profound hatred for the Maximum Leader that Hunt or Harlot or Harvey or Helms or Allen Dulles, or Richard Bissell, or Richard Nixon, or, for that matter, my father or Bobby Kennedy contained; no, there was a part of me that kept thinking of Castro as Fidel, yet I was looking for the death of Fidel. I would mourn Fidel if we succeeded, mourn him in just the way a hunter is saddened by the vanished immanence of the slain beast. Yes, one fired a bullet into beautiful animals in order to feel nearer to God: To the extent that we were criminal, we could approach the cosmos only by stealing a piece of the Creation—yes, I understood all of this and wanted Cubela to be an effective assassin rather than a ploy of the DGI whom we, in turn, would use in a superior ploy. A successful assassin was worth a hundred provocations.

I sat at my table alone, finishing the cognac I had not touched during the interview. Then I began to notice that the few workingmen standing at the bar had gathered around the café radio. It had been playing *bal musette* dance music for the last hour, but now a commentator's voice could be heard. I could not discern what was being said. The tone of voice, however, was urgent.

In another minute, the waiter came up to me. "Monsieur," he said, "*vous-êtes américain?*"

"Mais oui."

He was a tired, weary, gray-faced waiter, well over fifty, and wholly unremarkable in appearance, but his eyes looked at me with profound compassion.

"Monsieur, il y a des mauvaises nouvelles. Des nouvelles étonnantes." Now, he put his hand gently on mine. "*Votre President Kennedy a été frappé par un assassin à Dallas, Texas.*"

"Is he alive?" I asked, and then repeated, "*Est-il vivant?*"

The waiter said, "*On ne sait rien de plus, monsieur, sauf qu'il y avait une grande bouleversement.*"

37 |

The New Republic, Dec. 7, 1963
by Jean Daniel

Havana, Nov. 22, 1963

It was about 1:30 in the afternoon, Cuban time. We were having lunch in the living room of the modest summer residence which Fidel Castro owns on magnificent Veradero Beach, 120 kilometers from Havana. The telephone rang, a secretary in guerrilla garb announced that Mr. Dorticos, President of the Cuban Republic, had an urgent communication for the Prime Minister. Fidel picked up the phone and I heard him say: "*Cómo? Un atentado?*" ("What's that? An attempted assassination?") He turned to us to say that Kennedy had just been struck down in Dallas. Then he went back to the telephone and exclaimed in a

Nov 22, 1963

Ft. Worth to Dallas

OSWALD'S TALE / 669

(758)

669-670

about and found a plastic coffee cup in the sink that had clearly been used and judged he had had a cup of coffee and left . . .

MR. JENNER. A plastic cup with some remains in it of coffee?

MRS. PAYNE. Instant coffee; yes.³

When Roy Truly, superintendent of the School Book Depository, arrived at 8:00 A.M., he could see that Lee was already working, clipboard in hand.

McMillan: Knowing Marina's fascination with the President and Mrs. Kennedy, Ruth had left the television on when she went out . . . [and Marina] settled down on the sofa to watch . . . a rerun of a breakfast Mr. Kennedy had attended in Fort Worth. Somebody gave him a ten-gallon hat and he seemed to enjoy it.⁴

After the breakfast, Jack Kennedy had gone back to his hotel room for a few minutes of relaxation before he and his entourage would get into *Air Force One* for the brief flight from Fort Worth to Love Field in Dallas. In this passage taken from William Manchester's book *Death of a President*, the First Lady is speaking:

"Isn't this sweet, Jack?" she said. . . . "They've just stripped their whole museum of all their treasures to brighten this dingy hotel suite." . . . Taking the catalogue, he said, "Let's see who did it." There were several names at the end. The first was Mrs. J. Lee Johnson III. "Why don't we call her?" he suggested. "She must be in the phone book." Thus Ruth Carter Johnson, the wife of a Fort Worth newspaper executive, became the surprised recipient of John Kennedy's last telephone call. She was home nursing a sick daughter. She had watched the ballroom breakfast on WBAP-TV, and when she heard the President's voice she was speechless.⁵

Mrs. J. Lee Johnson III! One has to observe that her married name bears the first initial of J. Edgar Hoover, has Lee in the middle, and ends with the last name of the President who will succeed Jack Kennedy. (As a bonus, her maiden name is Carter.) Perhaps the cosmos likes to strew coincidences around the rim of the funnel into which large events are converging.

Manchester: [Kennedy] apologized for not phoning earlier, explaining that they hadn't reached the hotel until midnight. Then Mrs. Kennedy came on. To Mrs. Johnson she sounded thrilled and vivacious. "They're going to have a dreadful time getting me out of here with all these wonderful works of art," she said. "We're both touched—thank you so much."⁶

1759

Ken O'Donnell, the President's assistant, now carried in an unpleasant item. There was a full-page ad in the *Dallas Morning News* with a black border of the sort that accompanies the announcement of a death. It welcomed the President in one breath and then proceeded to accuse him of being a Communist tool. The people who had paid for the ad called themselves "The American Fact-Finding Committee."

Kennedy was not amused by what he read. His face showed as much when he passed the *Dallas Morning News* over to Jackie:

Manchester: Her vivacity disappeared; she felt sick. The President shook his head. In a low voice he asked Ken, "Can you imagine a paper doing a thing like that?" Then, slowly, he said to her, "... You know, last night would have been a hell of a night to assassinate a President." ... He said it casually, and she took it lightly; it was his way of shaking off the ad. ... "I mean it," he said now ... "There was the rain, and the night, and we were all getting jostled. Suppose a man had a pistol in a briefcase." He gestured vividly, pointing his rigid index finger at the wall and jerking his thumb twice to show the action of the hammer. "Then he could have dropped the gun and briefcase—" in pantomime he dropped them and whirled in a tense crouch—"and melted away in the crowd."⁷

The flight to Dallas took less than twenty minutes, and Vice-President Johnson was there at Love Field to head up the welcoming committee. The Kennedys got into the rear seat of the presidential limousine and Governor and Mrs. Connally took the jump seats. They would ride to the Trade Mart for a lunch scheduled to begin at twelve-thirty.

~~On the sixth floor of the Book Depository, a large part of the floor had been ripped up, and five men were laying plywood all morning. Lee had been around the sixth floor from time to time, but~~

Nov 22, 1963

676 / NORMAN MAILER

760

PP 676-679
Oswald's Tale

Start

MR. BAKER. As I got myself straightened up there, I guess it took me some 20, 30 feet, something like that, and it was about that time that I heard those shots come out. . . It hit me all at once it was a rifle shot because I had just got back from deer hunting and [so] it sounded to me like it was a high-powered rifle.

MR. BELIN. All right . . . what did you do and what did you see?

MR. BAKER. . . . I immediately kind of looked up, and I had a feeling it came from the building . . . in front of me . . . this Book Depository Building [because] as I was looking, all these pigeons began to fly up . . . and start flying around . . .

MR. BELIN. . . . After the third shot, then, what did you do?

MR. BAKER. Well, I revved that motorcycle up and I went down to the corner which would be approximately 180 to 200 feet from the point where . . . we heard the shots . . . You see, it looked to me like there were maybe 500 or 600 people in this area here [who] started running, you know, every direction, just trying to get back out of the way . . .

MR. BELIN. You then ran into the building, is that correct?

MR. BAKER. That is correct, sir.

MR. BELIN. What did you see and what did you do as you ran into the building?

MR. BAKER. As I entered this building . . . I just spoke out and asked where the stairs or elevator was, and this man, Mr. Truly, spoke up and said, it seems to me like he says, "I am a building manager. Follow me, officer, and I will show you." So . . . we kind of all ran, not real fast but, you know, a good trot, to the back of the building . . . and he was trying to get that service elevator . . . He hollered for it, said, "Bring that elevator down here."

MR. BELIN. How many times did he holler, to the best of your recollection?

MR. BAKER. It seemed like he did it twice . . . I said let's take the stairs . . .

MR. BELIN. . . . what was your intention at that time?

MR. BAKER. . . . to go all the way to the top where I thought the shots had come from, to see if I could find something there . . .

MR. BELIN. And did you go all the way up to the top of the stairs right away?

MR. BAKER. No, sir, we didn't . . . As I came out to the second floor there, Mr. Truly was ahead of me and . . . I caught a glimpse of this man walking away . . . about 20 feet away from me in the lunchroom.

MR. BELIN. What did you do?

MR. BAKER. I hollered at him at that time and said, "Come here." He turned and walked straight back to me . . .

MR. BELIN. He walked back toward you then?

MR. BAKER. Yes, sir . . .

MR. BELIN. Was he carrying anything in his hands?

MR. BAKER. He had nothing at that time.

MR. BELIN. All right. Were you carrying anything in either of your hands?

MR. BAKER. Yes, sir; I was . . . I had my revolver out.

MR. BELIN. When did you take your revolver out?

MR. BAKER. As I was starting up the stairway . . . I assumed that I was suspicious of everybody because I had my pistol out.

REPRESENTATIVE BOGGS. Right.

MR. BAKER. . . . Mr. Truly had come up to my side here, and I turned to Mr. Truly and I says, "Do you know this man? Does he work here?" And he said yes, and I turned immediately and went on out up the stairs . . .

REPRESENTATIVE BOGGS. When you saw him, was he out of breath, did he appear to have been running or what?

MR. BAKER. It didn't appear that to me. He appeared normal, you know.

REPRESENTATIVE BOGGS. Was he calm and collected?

MR. BAKER. Yes, sir. He never did say a word or nothing. In fact, he didn't change his expression one bit.

MR. BELIN. Did he flinch in any way when you put the gun up to his face?

MR. BAKER. No, sir . . .

MR. BELIN. . . . was there any expression after Mr. Truly said he worked there?

MR. BAKER. At that time I never did look back toward him . . . I *turned*

~~An Afterthought on the Movies~~

Innocent or guilty, the average man would be bound to flinch looking into the implacable eye of a pistol barrel. Oswald had to be in a remarkable state at this point, a calm beneath agitation, as if at rest in the vibrationless center of a dream. This, of course, assumes that he was the man who shot at Kennedy from the sixth floor. For some, however, there is no greater evidence of his innocence than that he was so cool. How could a man aim and fire three times at a moving target, see that there was impact, and yet have been able to spring up, hide his gun between other cartons in another end of the room, race silently down four flights of stairs, and be standing there in the lunchroom, unwinded, gazing passively at Officer Baker and his gun? For many critics, this seems impossible unless Oswald was not on the sixth floor when the shooting took place. The only reply if one supposes that he did shoot Kennedy is that he had passed through the mightiest of the psychic barriers—he had killed the king. It was equal psychologically to breaking through the sound barrier. All the controls were reversed. If such a transcendent calm was his state facing into Baker's gun, it must have lasted for only a little while. In the following minute, he slipped out of the Texas School Book Depository, and this remarkable if short-lived grasp on such powers of control began to come apart. The next time we see him, and it will be through the eyes of a highly biased witness—his former landlady Mrs. Bledsoe!—he looks demented.

First, however, we must conceive of the impact of Elm Street and Dealey Plaza upon his senses in that instant he steps outside. If he is the killer, then we know enough about him to understand that he has been living within a spiritual caul all morning, and the voices of others have seemed as far away as echoes heard from the other side of a hill. He has been centered on his mission, balanced on his own heartbeat, living in a sense of dread and expectation so intense that it is beyond agitation. He possesses the kind of inner silence some can know when ultimates are coming to a moment of decision: Will he have the courage to fire his rifle and will he shoot well? Everything else, including the mounting tempo of excitement in the crowds outside the Book Depository, has no more presence for him than the murmur of a passer-by. Stationed within himself, he has now descended to those depths where one waits for final judgment.

He must still have been in such a state when Officer Baker confronted him.

Stepping out into Dealey Plaza, therefore, must have been not unlike being hurled through a plate-glass window. Hundreds of people were milling around in disconnected hysteria. Men and women were weeping. Police sirens from every street and avenue in the area were screaming their way toward Dealey Plaza.

If the act of firing upon Kennedy had taken place as an event staged between himself and his vision of a great and thunderous stroke that would lift him at once from the mediocre to the immortal, this vision would not have included anyone else. Not even the victim.

Now, however, everybody around him is distraught. It is as if, all alone, he has set off an explosion in a mine-shaft. Then, having climbed to the surface, he has come suddenly upon a crowd of the bereaved. It is a scene alien to him. He hurries down the street away from the Book Depository until, several blocks away, he catches a bus.

On it is Mrs. Bledsoe, the same landlady who had cheated him of \$2 in the first week he was back in Dallas after Mexico:

MRS. BLEDSOE. . . . Oswald got on. He looks like a maniac. His sleeve was out here [indicating]. His shirt was undone . . . a hole in it, and he was dirty, and I didn't look at him. I didn't want to know I even seen him, and I just looked off, and then about that time the motorman said the President had been shot.¹

She may have been recollecting the inner light in Lee's eye when she told him that he would have to leave her rooming house.

The bus moves a block and stops. It is jammed in the gridlock around Dealey Plaza. Oswald goes up to the driver, asks for a transfer and gets off, then walks to the Greyhound bus station, where he can pick up a taxi.

MR. WHALEY. He said, "May I have the cab?"

I said, "You sure can. Get in." And instead of opening the back door, he opened the front door which is allowable there, and got in . . . the front seat. And about that time an old lady, I think she was an old lady, I don't remember nothing but her sticking her head down past him in the door and said, "Driver, will you call me a cab down here?"

Nov-22-24, 1963

(744)

Oswald's Tale
733-758

The Amateur Hit Man

The mystery of Oswald subsumes the enigma of Jack Ruby. Yet, if the first mystery has haunted the American intelligence establishment with the fear that it is implicated, Jack Ruby buggers reasonable comprehension for the rest of us. A minor thug from the streets of Chicago with a mentally unbalanced and often hospitalized mother, he has Mob connections. While they are no more impressive than those cherished by a hundred thousand other petty hoodlums in fifty American cities—which is to say, connections so tenuous and yet so familial that one can make a whole case or no case out of the same material—he has grown up among the Mob, and is on a first-name basis with Mob figures of the middle ranks. He is of the Mob in the specific values of his code, and yet never a formal member in any way—too wacky, too eager, too obsessed with himself, too Jewish even for the Jewish Mob. All the same, he is pure Mafia in one part of his spirit—he wants to be known as a patriot in love with his country and his people. He is loyal. Select him and you will not make a mistake.

We all know his famous story or cover story. He was grief-stricken by the death of JFK, so bereaved that he shut down his strip-joints for the weekend, and was so appalled at the possibility that Jacqueline Kennedy might have to come to Dallas to testify in Oswald's trial that he decided to shoot the accused—"the creep," as he would call him. But only at the last moment did he so decide. No premeditation. At 11:17 on Sunday morning, after waiting on line at a Western Union office to send \$25 to one of his strippers who was desperately in need of money, he crossed the street, went down the ramp into police headquarters, and ran smack into Oswald, who was being filmed by TV cameras in the basement as he walked with his police escort to a car that would take him to the

765

County Jail. There, imprinting the American mind forever with the open-mouthed expression of the victim and the squint-eyed disbelief of his guards, Ruby killed Oswald. Never before in history was a death witnessed by so many people giving full attention to their television sets. Much of the world now believed that Ruby was a Mafia hit man. The logic of such an inference suggested a conspiracy not only to kill Kennedy but Oswald as well, because he knew too much.

The concept, clear as a good movie scenario, ran into one confusion that has never been resolved: Why was Ruby standing on line in Western Union waiting his turn to send \$25 to a stripper while time kept floating away and Oswald might be moved at any moment? The question could not be answered. How many confederates—and most of them had to be police—would be necessary to coordinate such a move? No one who is the key figure in a careful schedule that will reach its climax just as the target is being transferred is going to be found dawdling across the street at a Western Union office with only a few minutes to go. It would take hours for a stage director to begin to choreograph such a scene for an opera.

Ruby himself would say in the last interview he gave before he died of cancer that there was no way he could have been part of any calculation to bring him there at just the instant Oswald passed unless "it was the most perfect conspiracy in the history of the world . . . the difference in meeting this fate was thirty seconds one way or the other."

So, the death of Oswald is filled with the groans of thwarted logic. Yet never on the face of it has a crime seemed to belong more to the Mafia.

In a brilliant book exploring the rifts within the American establishment, *The Yankee and Cowboy War*, Carl Oglesby was the first to advance the notion that Ruby was trying to tell Earl Warren that the Mafia certainly did order him to commit the deed. If Warren would just fly him, Jack Ruby, back to Washington on that same day, he, Jack Ruby, could furnish Warren with all the truth and, to prove it, would take a lie detector test on the spot.

As one reads these declarations in Jack Ruby's testimony, it is difficult not to believe that Oglesby is right. In the course of a half hour, Ruby repeats his request five times.

MR. RUBY. Is there any way to get me to Washington?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. I beg your pardon?

MR. RUBY. Is there any way of you getting me to Washington?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. I don't know of any. I will be glad to talk to your counsel about what the situation is, Mr. Ruby, when we get an opportunity to talk.

MR. RUBY. I don't think I will get a fair representation with my counsel, Joe Tonahill. I don't think so . . .²

He disavows Joe Tonahill. He is all but saying that he cannot know whom his lawyer is working for.

In another minute, he repeats himself:

MR. RUBY. . . . Gentlemen, unless you get me to Washington, you can't get a fair shake out of me.

If you understand my way of talking, you have got to bring me to Washington to get the tests.

Do I sound dramatic? Off the beam?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. No; you are speaking very rationally, and I am really surprised that you can remember as much as you have remembered up to the present time.

You have given it to us in detail.

MR. RUBY. Unless you can get me to Washington, and I am not a crackpot, I have all my senses—I don't want to evade any crime I am guilty of.³

Five minutes go by. They speak of other matters.

Then Ruby pushes his request again, even takes it another step:

MR. RUBY. . . . Gentlemen, if you want to hear any further testimony, you will have to get me to Washington soon, because it has something to do with you, Chief Warren.

Do I sound sober enough to tell you this?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. Yes; go right ahead.

MR. RUBY. I want to tell the truth, and I can't tell it here. I can't tell it here. Does that make sense to you?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. Well, let's not talk about sense. But I really can't see why you can't tell this Commission.⁴

Well, he can't. Not in Dallas. Ruby all but shrieks at them: You dummies!—can't you see that I can't tell it here? You people don't

run this town. You can't protect me in Dallas. I'll get knifed in my cell, and the guards will be looking the other way.

MR. RUBY. . . . My reluctance to talk—you haven't had any witness in telling the story, in finding so many problems?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. You have a greater problem than any witness we ever had.

MR. RUBY. I have a lot of reasons for having those problems . . . If you request me to go back to Washington with you right now, that couldn't be done, could it?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. No; it could not be done. It could not be done. There are a good many things involved in that, Mr. Ruby.

MR. RUBY. What are they?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. Well, the public attention that it would attract, and the people who would be around. We have no place there for you to be safe when we take you out, and there are not law enforcement officers, and it isn't our responsibility to go into anything of that kind . . .⁵

Ruby tries to explain it to them in the simplest terms. "Gentlemen, my life is in danger." Then he adds, "Not with my guilty plea of execution." (He has been sentenced to death by a jury in Dallas.) No, he is trying to tell them: I will be killed a lot sooner than that.

MR. RUBY. . . . Do I sound sober enough to you as I say this?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. You do. You sound entirely sober.

MR. RUBY. From the moment I started my testimony, have I sounded as though, with the exception of becoming emotional, have I sounded as though I made sense, what I was speaking about?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. You have indeed. I understood everything you have said. If I haven't, it is my fault.

MR. RUBY. Then I follow this up. I may not live tomorrow to give any further testimony . . . the only thing I want to get out to the public, and I can't say it here, is with authenticity, with sincerity of the truth of everything and why my act was committed, but it can't be said here . . .

Chairman Warren, if you felt that your life was in danger at the moment, how would you feel? Wouldn't you be reluctant to go on speaking, even though you request me to do so?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. I think I might have some reluctance if I was in your position, yes; I should think I would. I think I would figure it out very carefully as to whether it would endanger me or not.

If you think that anything that I am doing or anything that I am asking you is endangering you in any way, shape, or form, I want you to feel absolutely free to say that when the interview is over.

MR. RUBY. What happens then? I didn't accomplish anything.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. No; nothing has been accomplished.

MR. RUBY. Well, then you won't follow up with anything further?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. There wouldn't be anything to follow up if you hadn't completed your statement.

MR. RUBY. You said you have the power to do what you want to do, is that correct?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. Exactly.

MR. RUBY. Without any limitations?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. . . . We have the right to take testimony of anyone we want in this whole situation, and we have the right . . . to verify that statement in any way that we wish to do it.

MR. RUBY. But you don't have a right to take a prisoner back with you when you want to?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. No; we have the power to subpoena witnesses to Washington if we want to do it, but we have taken the testimony of 200 or 300 people, I would imagine, here in Dallas without going to Washington.

MR. RUBY. Yes; but those people aren't Jack Ruby.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. No; they weren't.

MR. RUBY. They weren't.⁶

In the pause, Ruby tries to inform them of the incalculable depth of the peril he feels:

MR. RUBY. I tell you, gentlemen, my whole family is in jeopardy. My sisters. as to their lives.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. Yes?

MR. RUBY. Naturally, I am a foregone conclusion. My sisters Eva, Eileen, and Mary . . .

My brothers Sam, Earl, Hyman, and myself naturally—my in-laws, Harold Kaminsky, Marge Ruby, the wife of Earl, and Phyllis, the wife of Sam Ruby, they are in jeopardy of loss of their lives . . . just because they are blood related to myself—does that sound serious enough for you, Chief Justice Warren?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. Nothing could be more serious, if that is the fact . . .⁷

At this point, Ruby begins to despair of reaching Warren with his message. He cannot know how great the odds are that Lyndon Johnson has already reached Earl Warren more than half a year earlier with an even more secret message—*lone gunman; no conspiracy; the calm and well-being of our country is asking for nothing less*. So Ruby, in all the lacerated but still functioning wounds of his sensibility, is beginning to recognize that his own agenda is hopeless. If he keeps talking this way and Warren does not listen to him, then the record of this testimony could open him and his family to Mafia reprisal. So he returns—he reverts—to the sound of his own music, his operatic cover story: He invokes the name of Jackie Kennedy.

MR. RUBY. . . . I felt very emotional and very carried away for Mrs. Kennedy, that with all the strife she had gone through—I had been following it pretty well—that someone owed it to our beloved President that she shouldn't be expected to come back to face trial of this heinous crime.

And I have never had the chance to tell that, to back it up, to prove it.⁸

Since he has already spoken of threats to his life and to his brothers and sisters and Warren will not take him back to Washington, he now has to remove all onus from the Mafia. So he brings in the John Birch Society, but vaguely . . . vaguely . . . No one can follow him now.

MR. RUBY. . . . there is a John Birch Society right now in activity, and Edwin Walker is one of the top men of this organization—take it for what it is worth, Chief Justice Warren.

Unfortunately for me, for me giving the people the opportunity to get in power, because of the act I committed, has put a lot of people in jeopardy with their lives.

Don't register with you, does it?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. No; I don't understand that.⁹

Back goes Ruby to Jackie Kennedy. It may not be very convincing, but at least it is a story that cannot be disproven. What with the way he has learned to talk, back and forth, in and out, about and around, nobody is going to get into his head and refute his tale.

MR. RUBY. Yes . . . a small comment in the newspaper that . . . Mrs. Kennedy may have to come back for the trial of Lee Harvey Oswald.

That caused me to go like I did; that caused me to go like I did.

I don't know, Chief Justice, but I got so carried away. And I remember prior to that thought, there has never been another thought in my mind; I was never malicious toward this person. No one else requested me to do anything.¹⁰

"No one . . . requested me to do anything."

If a copy of this transcript gets out—and there are lawyers and lawyers' clerks abounding in the halls of Ruby's paranoia ready to rush to the wrong people with just such a text—he can always point to this line: "No one else requested me to do anything."

It is so serious to him, and so godawful. He, Jack Ruby—a good and generous man who fought his way up from the Chicago streets into a decent existence, a semi-decent existence, anyway—is now going to be executed by the government, or else he will be killed by some Mafia minion, some prison guard or convict, in a jail he knows is not safe, because of a crime he did not wish to commit in the first place.

It is monstrously unfair to Ruby, thinks Ruby, and more unfair to his family. The people outside who will punish him if he rats on them are evil. And evil has no bounds, as Hitler proved. So, if Jack Ruby tries to explain to the Warren Commission that he was only an agent in the death of Oswald, a pawn for the Mafia leaders who passed the order down the line to the man who gave him the order, then there will be Mafia leaders rabid with rage because he tried to rat on them. In retaliation, they will yet kill all the Jews. The safety of the Jews always hangs by a hair, anyway.

Let us try to assimilate the reasoning. It is not that Ruby is insane. He is, however, all but insane: He has an even larger sense of the importance of his own life than did Oswald. If they kill Ruby, feels Ruby, then all of his immediate family and his larger family, world Jewry, is in peril.

So he rallies for one more attempt:

MR. RUBY. . . it is pretty haphazard to tell you the things I should tell you . . . I am in a tough spot and I do not know what the solution can be to save me . . . I want to say this to you . . . The Jewish people are being exterminated at this moment. Consequently, a whole new form of government is going to take over our country, and I know I won't live to see you another time.

Do I sound sort of screwy in telling you these things?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. No; I think that is what you believe, or you wouldn't tell it under your oath.

MR. RUBY. But it is a very serious situation. I guess it is too late to stop it, isn't it?¹¹

If he cannot save himself, then he cannot save humanity. He is, unknowingly, a spiritual brother to Oswald. The fate of mankind, so each reasoned separately, rested on his shoulders.

He makes his very last attempt. How many times will he have to spell it out? Can't they comprehend why he must get to Washington for these lie detector tests?

MR. RUBY. I have been used for a purpose, and there will be a certain tragic occurrence happening if you don't take my testimony and somehow vindicate me so my people don't suffer because of what I have done.¹²

Yes, if I am killed, my people will be killed.

MR. RUBY. . . Because when you leave here, I am finished. My family is finished.

REPRESENTATIVE FORD. Isn't it true, Mr. Chief Justice, that the same maximum protection and security Mr. Ruby has been given in the past will be continued?

MR. RUBY. But now that I have divulged certain information . . .¹³

He has spoken too much on this day, he is trying to tell Gerry Ford. His security will be affected. "I want to take a polygraph test," he tells them, but "maybe certain people don't want to know the truth that may come out of me. Is that plausible?"¹⁴

If Ruby is not out of his mind, merely all-but-insane—that is, highly disturbed but sane—then he really does seem to be saying that he acted as a hit man. Yet there is still the odd wait on line in the Western Union office. How to explain that?

We had better take a look at a few Mafia sentiments concerning Kennedy. Indeed, we are obliged to.

For months, through all of 1963, there had been low sounds rumbling down from the summits. "Who will remove this stone from my shoe?" asked Carlos Marcello, referring to Jack Kennedy as the stone, and Santos Trafficante had said worse. Jimmy Hoffa was livid on the subject of the Kennedys. Not only was there a host of rumors after November 22 that Trafficante, Marcello, and Hoffa had given the order to kill Jack Kennedy, but indeed the House Select Committee on Assassinations, so far as it came to a conclusion, decided in 1979 that the Mafia probably had done it (although, certainly, no smoking gun was found).

Recently a book, *Mob Lawyer*, by Frank Ragano, Trafficante's legal counselor, was a bit more specific, although no more can be claimed for such a work in relation to the assassination than that it is a teaser; but Ragano does make it clear that Marcello and Trafficante certainly wanted Jimmy Hoffa to believe they were responsible for the act. "You tell him he owes me, and he owes me big," said Marcello to Ragano,¹⁵ passing a message to Hoffa in impeccable Sicilian metaphor that a proper repayment for such a coup might be to receive a loan of \$3.5 million from the Teamsters' pension fund for investment in a lavish French Quarter hotel that Marcello and Trafficante wished to open. Ragano's disclosure supplies no witness to their conversation but Trafficante (now dead).

Nonetheless, it stimulates one's own imagination toward two hypotheses, each of which, for our purposes, can point in the same direction. An hypothesis, no matter how uncomfortable or bizarre on its first presentation, will thrive or wither by its ability to explain the facts available: These two hypotheses are able not only to live but to nourish themselves on the numerous details Gerald Posner gathered from various sources in his long and careful delineation of Jack Ruby's movements during the three days, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, of Oswald's incarceration. Indeed, Pos-