

ner's chapter on Ruby may be the most careful and well-written section in his book.

Posner amasses these details to prove that Ruby was not acting under orders but was mentally unbalanced, and he gives us more than thirty pages of text as he follows Ruby's behavior after the President's death.

It will be interesting, however, to use Posner's carefully collected details to support an opposite point—that Ruby killed Oswald under orders from above.

Let us take up our two hypotheses. The first, and larger, one is that Marcello and/or Trafficante did give an order sometime in September, October, or November to assassinate Jack Kennedy. Given, however, the solemnity of such a deed and the dangers surrounding such an attempt, the precautions employed to wall themselves off from the act would have been so thoroughgoing that the order had to pass through a number of cut-outs, and each cut-out would only be able to identify the man who had given him his order. Be it said that the executive details of the assassination were left to people at the other end of the line—those who would do the deed. So great was the separation, in fact, that Marcello and/or Trafficante would not know the killer (or killers) or the date or the place. It could happen anywhere—Miami, Texas, Washington, New York—it would not matter. They would not be near any of the immediate details.

Immediately after the assassination of Kennedy occurred, they assumed—how would they not?—that it was the fulfillment of their order. When they learned, therefore, in the first hour that Oswald was calling himself a patsy, his fate was sealed. A patsy talks—Oswald had to be removed. That he was the nephew of Dutz Murret and so could be connected, no matter how indirectly, to Marcello doubled the need to get rid of him. That he had not been one of their killers and had nothing to do with them might never have occurred to Marcello or Trafficante. They were hardly going to be in conference with their cut-outs. Instead, a quick order was sent out: Put a hit on Oswald. This time they were in a rush, so there were probably not as many cut-outs; and more than one candidate for hit man in Dallas may have been selected, either in the way of locals or out-of-state professionals quickly dispatched there on Friday afternoon. Ruby—so this hypothesis would go—was one of the putative hit men. He was an amateur, a flake, and might be lacking enough dedication to pull off the job.

But Ruby did present two positive factors: He was, when all was said, a part of their culture—he would be afraid to talk—and he had the huge and unique advantage of access. For every soldier they made, the Mafia knew the characters and habits of a thousand men. So they also knew that Ruby was on good, friendly terms with at least a hundred Dallas cops. Ergo, Ruby could get to Oswald. He might not be the best man for the job, but he was certainly the one who would have the best chance of doing it in the shortest possible time.

Word, therefore, was passed to him by somebody he saw on Friday afternoon. It would be rank speculation to fix on Ralph Paul, Ruby's oldest friend, a man then in his sixties, for Paul was gentle and had no more known relations to the Mafia than that he ran a restaurant in Dallas. Of course, it can be said that big-city restaurant owners are rarely without liaison to the Mob. Ralph Paul was also one of Ruby's closest friends and was owed tens of thousands of dollars by Ruby—which the Mob would also have known. Ralph Paul could have delivered a message: "Kill Oswald and *they* will take care of you."

If the question was how could Ruby do the deed and get away with it, the answer was that with the right lawyer, Ruby would only receive a few years or, with a defense on grounds of insanity, might get away with no time at all. His financial condition could certainly be alleviated. His deep debts would be rearranged, and the money he owed to the IRS could be paid off. And for motive Ruby was furnished with a beautiful if crazy reason, or came up with the reason himself—which is even more likely—because the reason existed already as a kind of minor motive within him, a small infatuation: He was the kind of exceedingly sentimental man who would indeed have detested the pain it would cause Jackie Kennedy to testify in Dallas. An actor can play a killer, or a lover, or a policeman, or a thief if even 5 percent of such a possibility exists within him. Ruby was an actor manqué: He had the first requirement for good stage performance—his emotions were quickly available, so available indeed that they kept intruding on his syntax, which is why his speeches are sometimes so hard to follow.

The above is the first hypothesis. The second is simpler. Marcello and Trafficante had made their noises back and forth with Hoffa about getting a hit on the President, but they had issued no orders. They had merely fumed, and been afraid to make such a move. Yet when the President was killed, they had an opportunity

to rake in some huge profits with Teamster funds, so they took pains to let Hoffa know that they had been the masterminds behind the deed. Indeed, Ragano hints at this likelihood in *Mob Lawyer*: "If there was a possibility of making big money, Santo and Carlos were capable of conning Jimmy into believing they had arranged the assassination solely for his benefit."¹⁶ Now Jimmy could show his appreciation by diverting those Teamster pension monies into a loan for their hotel. The problem was Oswald. When he talked, assuming he would, Hoffa would be able to see that Marcello and Trafficante had had nothing to do with the death in Dealey Plaza. So Oswald had to be marked for extinction.

Hypothesis One and Hypothesis Two may be at great variance, but they come to the same conclusion—given the need to move quickly: Jack Ruby is anointed to be a hit man.

That he did not see it as an honor is evident in his behavior. The assignment is equal to the total disruption of his life. Ralph Paul, if he was the last cut-out to Ruby, would have issued no personal threats, but then, he would not have had to. To disobey that kind of order would prove considerably more damaging than the cost of doing the deed. Ruby could only guess who might have initiated such a project, but whoever the top man was, he would not be sitting far from the devil's right hand.

If we are now in position to see whether the details collected by Posner conflict or agree with the common point of these two hypotheses, the first question to pose is when Ruby might have been given such an order: The earliest time that one can reasonably suggest is when he talked to Ralph Paul, at about 2:45 that Friday afternoon. It was only an hour and a quarter after the announcement of the death, but then, the move from above could have been quick. Marcello and Trafficante may have been renowned not only for their caution but for their speed.

Posner: The Carousel's records show a call to the Bullpen [Paul's] restaurant at 2:42 for less than a minute. When Ruby discovered Paul was not at his restaurant but instead at home, he telephoned him there. The phone record shows he called Paul at 2:43.¹⁷

MR. PAUL. . . . when I got home Jack called me and he said, "Did you hear what happened?" I said, "Yes; I heard it on the air." He says, "Isn't that a terrible thing?" I said, "Yes; Jack." He said, "I made up my mind. I'm going to close it down." . . .

MR. HUBERT. Did he discuss with you whether he should close down?

MR. PAUL. No; he didn't discuss it. He told me he was going to close down.¹⁸

Unless it was Paul who told him to. Ralph Paul, as the message bearer, could well have said: "Jack, you've got to close down for the next couple of days. You are going to need all your free time to find a way to bring this off."

Posner presents evidence that would oppose such an assumption. Ruby is very emotional in the office of the *Dallas Morning News* after he first hears of the attack, and speaks already of how awful it is for Jackie Kennedy and her children. He is crying when he leaves the newspaper office. This, however, is only by Ruby's own account to the Warren Commission: "I left the building and I went down and got my car, and I couldn't stop crying . . ."¹⁹ But he may have been lying, particularly if he did not start crying until later that day.

In any event, he visits his sister twice that afternoon, and by then must certainly have been given the word. His sister was ill in bed, having just returned to her home a few days before from an abdominal operation, and he had gone out to shop for her.

Posner: Ruby was back at Eva's by 5:30 and stayed for two hours.

Eva said he returned with "enough groceries for 20 people . . . but he didn't know what he was doing then." He told her that he wanted to close the clubs. "And he said, 'Listen, we are broke anyway, so I will be a broken millionaire. I am going to close for three days.' " In dire financial straits, and barely breaking even with both clubs open seven days a week, his decision to close was an important gesture . . .

But his sister Eva witnessed the real depth of his anguish, and unwittingly contributed to it. "He was sitting on this chair and crying. . . . He was sick to his stomach . . . and went into the bathroom . . . He looked terrible."²⁰

As she says to the Warren Commission:

MRS. GRANT. . . . he just wasn't himself, and truthfully, so help me, [he said] "Somebody tore my heart out," and he says, "I didn't

even feel so bad when pops died because poppa was an old man."²¹

This, she indicates, is the worst state she has ever seen him in. That he has brought more food than anyone can eat is natural. Food is life, and his life may soon be over. It is all very well to take a shot at Oswald, but what if he, Jack Ruby, is mowed down in the process?

Once he left his sister's house, he went over to police headquarters at City Hall, where Oswald was being interrogated. He never had had trouble getting in before, and now, given the exceptional influx of newsmen, there was no difficulty at all. From 6:00 P.M. on, he was there, expecting, but not knowing whether he would have, an opportunity to get near enough to Oswald to do the job.

Posner: John Rutledge, the night police reporter for the *Dallas Morning News*, knew Ruby. He saw him step off the elevator, hunched between two out-of-state reporters with press identifications on their coats. "The three of them just walked past policemen, around the corner, past those cameras and lights, and on down the hall," recalled Rutledge. The next time Rutledge saw him, he was standing outside room 317, where Oswald was being interrogated, and "he was explaining to members of the out-of-state press who everybody was that came in and out of the door. . . . There would be a thousand questions shot at him at once, and Jack would straighten them all out. . . ." Soon several detectives walked by, and one recognized him. "Hey, Jack, what are you doing here?" "I am helping all these fellows," Ruby said, pointing to the pack of reporters . . .

Victor Robertson, a WFAA Radio reporter, also knew Ruby. He saw him approach the door to the office where Oswald was being interrogated and start to open it. "He had the door open a few inches," recalled Robertson, "and began to step into the room, and the two officers stopped him. . . . One of them said, 'You can't go in there, Jack.' "

Ruby probably left police headquarters shortly after 8:30 . . .²²

He had failed in his first attempt. Now he made a quick trip to his apartment, where he found George Senator, his roommate, at

home. Senator later stated in an affidavit that it happened to be the "first time I ever saw tears in his eyes."²³ Then Ruby went on to his synagogue. No surprise if he was ready to pray.

Posner: He cried openly at the synagogue. "They didn't believe a guy like Jack would ever cry," said his brother Hyman. "Jack never cried in his life. He is not that kind of a guy . . ."²⁴

Yes, he will tell people, he simply cannot bear the thought of that beautiful woman, the former First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy, being obliged to return to Dallas and testify. You pay your money and you take your choice, but as a betting proposition—with all due respect to Jacqueline Kennedy—it must be 18 to 5 that Ruby is thinking of himself. And if it were anyone but Jacqueline Kennedy, the odds might be 99 to 1 that he is brooding about no one but himself. All he has is his life, and it is being taken away from him. A precious gem, a ruby, is about to be thrown into the crapper.

After the synagogue, he went right back to police headquarters.

Posner: When he arrived at the third floor of the station, he encountered a uniformed officer who did not recognize him. Ruby saw several detectives he knew, shouted to them, and they helped him get inside. Once there, he said he was "carried away with the excitement of history." Detective A. M. Eberhardt, who knew Ruby and had been at his club, was in the burglary-and-theft section when Jack "stuck his head in our door and hollered at us. . . . He came in and said hello to me, shook hands with me. I asked him what he was doing. He told me he was a translator for the newspapers. . . . He said, 'I am here as a reporter' and he took the notebook and hit it."²⁵

He has taken cognizance of the situation. He has not been a vendor in ball parks and burlesque houses and a street hustler for too little: He is laying the groundwork to become indispensable to any number of reporters. He never knows when the right door will open and the opportunity will be there. This is the field of operations, and he may have a chance to try again before midnight.

Posner: In less than half an hour, Oswald was brought out of

midnight press conference. Ruby recalled that as Oswald walked past, "I was standing about two or three feet away."²⁶

The challenge has to be equivalent to jumping for the first time into a quarry pool from a height of forty or fifty feet. And Ruby cannot take the step. All he has to do is pull out his gun and finish Oswald off, but he cannot make the move. It is, after all, a vertiginous leap.

He is sick at his own cowardice, even as all of us are when we fail to take that daring little jump which some higher instinct, or a bully, or a parent, or a brother, is commanding us to take.

Posner: In his first statement to the FBI, Ruby admitted he had his .38 caliber revolver with him on Friday night (Commission Document 1252.9). Later, when he realized that carrying his pistol might be construed as evidence of premeditation, he said he did not have his gun on Friday. However, a photo of the rear of Ruby, taken in the third-floor corridor that night, shows a lump under the right rear of his jacket. If he was a mob-hired killer with a contract on Oswald, he would have shot him at the first opportunity. Certainly, any contract to kill Oswald would not have been one Ruby could fulfill at his leisure. Yet when he had the perfect opportunity, with Oswald only a couple of feet away, Ruby did not shoot him.²⁷

Posner may lack empathy here. Just because you are told to kill Oswald doesn't mean you can do it. Indeed, Ruby may still be looking for some way to perform the act and yet get out scot-free. That is a fantasy, but then, he is not a professional killer. What he cannot stomach is that there seems no way he will be able to follow orders without paying a prohibitive price.

In the meantime, to cut the losses to his ego, he continues networking.

MR. PAPPAS. It was at this point that I ran into Ruby—the first time that I recall. He came up to me as I was waiting for Wade and he said . . . "Are you a reporter?" I said, "Yes." . . . And he reached into his pocket, and he pulled out a card. It said the Carousel Club on it. And I was amazed. I didn't know who he was or what he was. My immediate impression of him was that he was a detective. He was well dressed, nattily dressed, I imag-

ine. [A little later] he said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I am trying to get Henry Wade over to the telephone." He said, "Do you want me to get him?" . . . I said, "Yes, I would like to have him over here." And he went around the desk, over to Henry Wade on the telephone . . .²⁸

Ruby is investing more and more of himself in a role that enables him to hang around the third floor, waiting to pick up a better opportunity. It helps that he loves the role. As long as he can live within it, he can, like an actor, feel vital and alive; he can keep the dread of his real mission apart from himself.

Once he leaves police headquarters, however, he has to pass through a *Walpurgisnacht*. He wanders back and forth to newspaper offices and takes sandwiches to the people working at KLIF. In between, he spends an hour in a car talking to a couple, Kathy Kay, a former stripper at the Carousel, and Harry Olsen,²⁹ a policeman, and all three are talking in Olsen's car about how terrible it must be for Jackie Kennedy. The stripper begins to weep and the men join her with a few tears. In the moil and meld of such mutual compassion for Jackie Kennedy, all three feel respect for each other, deep respect, and each expresses it so.

After more wandering through the Dallas night, Ruby goes back to his apartment and wakes up George Senator.

MR. SENATOR. Yes; it was different. It was different; the way he looked at you . . .

MR. HUBERT. Had you seen him in that condition before?

MR. SENATOR. . . . I have seen him hollering, things like I told you in the past, but this here, he had sort of a stare look in his eye . . .

MR. GRIFFIN. I didn't catch that. What kind of a look?

MR. SENATOR. A stare look; I don't know . . . I don't know how to put it into words.

MR. HUBERT. But it was different from anything you had ever seen on Jack Ruby before?

MR. SENATOR. Yes.

MR. HUBERT. And it was noticeably so?

MR. SENATOR. Oh yes.³⁰

Ruby then calls up his handyman, Larry Crafard, at the Carousel, wakes him up, and drives the youth and George Senator out to a billboard in Dallas that says: IMPEACH EARL WARREN. Ruby had been very upset earlier that day when he saw an ad, taken out by a man named Bernard Weissman, in the *Dallas Morning News* alluding to Jack Kennedy as a Communist supporter. He is now convinced that the John Birch Society invented the name Weissman in order to blame the Jews.

Now he, Jack Ruby, will soon be one of the Jews being blamed for the death of Kennedy, even if he will only be blamed in the secondary sense that *they* have selected him to be the one to kill Oswald. So Jack Ruby, a Jew, will pay the second heaviest price. He is a scapegoat, just like the Jews in the Holocaust, and just like all Jews who will soon be blamed for the Weissman ad.

In his distraught state, he takes photographs of the billboard—IMPEACH EARL WARREN—as if this is not only evidential material of some sort but may even prove sacramental for someone in his position. If he is acting a little loopy, well, very few hit men out on a mission are reputed to comport themselves as one hundred percent sane.

It is daybreak on Saturday before he drops Larry Crafard off at the Carousel and the handyman promptly goes back to sleep on the sofa in Ruby's office.

Crafard has his revenge, however, by telephoning Ruby at eight-thirty in the morning. There is no food for the dogs at the Carousel, he tells his boss. Ruby flies into a rage for having had his sleep disturbed and proceeds to chew Crafard out as he never has before. Indeed, his language is so personal that Crafard packs his stuff and takes off. He is angry enough or uneasy enough to hitchhike back home to Michigan.

Somewhat later that morning, we learn from Posner,

Ruby turned on the television and saw a memorial service broadcast from New York. "I watched Rabbi Seligman," he recalled. "He eulogized that here is a man [JFK] that fought in every battle, went to every country, and had to come back to his own country to be shot in the back. That created a tremendous emotional feeling for me, the way he said that."³¹

Doubtless, Ruby is trying to find impressive reasons for his intended act. He is too big a man to do such a job just because the

Mob has ordered it; no, he is potentially an honorable Jewish patriot who wishes to redress a wrong in the universe. We have to recognize that Ruby, now that he has been given his assignment, does not have to justify it with Mob motivations or by Mob professionalism—"I'm there to do the hit, that's it"—no, Ruby, being an amateur, would look to ennoble his task.

In any case, he seems to move without large purpose until mid-afternoon, when he goes to Dealey Plaza. As he sees the multitude of wreaths laid out for Jack Kennedy in the plaza, he weeps in his car, or so he testifies.

Posner: When he left Dealey Plaza, it appears Ruby once more went to the third floor of the police headquarters, expecting an Oswald transfer that never took place. He later denied being there Saturday because, again, he probably feared it might be interpreted as evidence of premeditation. The Warren Commission said it "reached no firm conclusion as to whether or not Ruby visited the Dallas Police Department on Saturday." Yet credible eyewitness testimony shows he was there.³²

He is still looking and he is still weeping. Ruby must have wept and/or had tears in his eyes ten to twenty times from Friday to Sunday. But, we can remind ourselves once more, he is crying for himself. His life is slipping away from him. Nevertheless, to maintain some finer sense of himself, he is also weeping for Jack, Jackie, and the children:

Soon enough, he begins to prowls again:

Posner: ... Later in the afternoon [TV reporters in their van] saw him on their monitors wandering the third floor of police headquarters and approaching Wade in an office, from which regular reporters were barred.³³

Indeed, he is hyperactive:

Posner: Thayer Waldo, a reporter with the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, watched Ruby giving out Carousel cards to reporters between 4:00 and 5:00 P.M. He was aggressive in getting the reporters' attention, pulling the sleeves of some and slapping others on the back or arms. When he got to Waldo, Ruby said,

"... Here's my card with both my clubs on it. Everybody around here knows me. . . . As soon as you get a chance, I want all of you boys to come over to my place . . . and have a drink on me . . ." ³⁴

Half of the time he is even behaving as he would if his life were to go on just as it used to. He seems to have forgotten that he has closed the Carousel. He is living in two states of being. He is in his own skin and he is also playing the lead in a film full of significance and future heartbreak.

That Saturday night, with Oswald locked in his jail cell on an inaccessible floor, begins another long dark journey. Ruby has failed to produce, and it is a reasonable assumption that *they* will soon be letting him know about it.

Posner: By 9:30 Ruby had returned to his apartment. There, he received a call from one of his strippers, Karen Bennett Carlin, whose stage name was Little Lynn. She had driven into Dallas from Fort Worth with her husband and wondered if the Carousel was going to open over the weekend, because she needed money. "He got very angry and was very short with me," Carlin recalled. "He said, 'Don't you have any respect for the President? Don't you know the President is dead? . . . I don't know when I will open. I don't know if I will ever open back up.'" ³⁵

How can he? If he does not kill Oswald, the Mob, after breaking his nose, his chin, and his kneecaps, will proceed to take his clubs away. But if he succeeds, the government will take the Carousel. At ten o'clock, he telephones his sister Eva to complain about how depressed he is.

An hour goes by, and then he calls Ralph Paul. No answer.

Posner: Ruby telephoned [Paul's] restaurant again at 11:18 and discovered Paul had gone home. He then telephoned Paul three times at home, at 11:19 for three minutes, at 11:36 for two minutes, and at 11:47 for one minute. Paul said he did not feel well, and told Ruby "I was sick and I was going to bed and not to call me." ³⁶

That night, the Dallas jail received anonymous phone threats on Oswald's life. On later reflection, Captain Fritz thought the

calls might have come from Ruby. Perhaps they did. Ruby would have been looking for excuses—I had it all set up for Sunday, but they moved Oswald on Saturday night.

Now, he calls an old friend, Lawrence Meyers, who is in Dallas for a couple of days:

MR. MEYERS. . . . he was obviously very upset . . . he seemed far more incoherent than I have ever listened to him. The guy sounded absolutely like he had flipped his lid, I guess . . .

I said, Jack, where are you . . . He said come have a drink with me or a cup of coffee with me . . . I said, Jack, that is silly. I am undressed. I have bathed. I am in bed. I want to go to sleep but, I said, if you want a cup of coffee you come on over here and come on up to my room . . . He said, no, no, he had things to do. He couldn't come over . . . This went on for a little while and the last thing I said, Jack, why don't you go ahead and get a good night's sleep and forget this thing. And you call me about 6 o'clock tomorrow night . . . and we will have dinner together and he said okay . . .

MR. GRIFFIN. . . . the FBI has quoted you as saying that one of the things that Ruby told you in the conversation was, "I have got to do something about this." Do you remember that?

MR. MEYERS. Definitely.³⁷

We can interpret that remark in two ways: I, on my own, have to do something about this; or, I have been told to do something about this.

He slept in one or another fashion that night and awoke in a terrible mood:

MR. SENATOR. . . . He made himself a couple of scrambled eggs and coffee for himself, and he still had this look which didn't look good . . . how can I express it? The look in his eyes? . . .

MR. HUBERT. The way he talked or what he said?

MR. SENATOR. The way he talked. He was even mumbling, which I didn't understand. And right after breakfast he got dressed. Then after he got dressed he was pacing the floor from the living room to the bedroom, from the bedroom to the living room, and his lips were going. What he was jabbering I didn't know. But he was really pacing.³⁸

In the telephone conversation the night before, Meyers, referring to Jackie Kennedy, had said: "Life goes on. She will make a life for herself . . ."³⁹

It was the worst thing Meyers could have said. By now, Jack Ruby and Jackie Kennedy are one—two suffering souls who have merged. Ruby does not want to make a new life for himself—he wants his old one back.

It is so painful. Ruby cannot ask directly for sympathy, but his self-love is pouring out of him. He is bleeding for Jackie Kennedy as if she is that beautiful element in his soul that no one else knows about, and soon it will all be lost.

He is distraught in still another fashion. When he woke up on Sunday morning, he must have been living with what he had learned the night before—Oswald was scheduled to be transferred at 10:00 A.M. If he wasn't at City Hall for the transfer, he might never have as good an opportunity at the County Jail.

Ruby, however, had decided not to be present. During the night, he had made up his mind. He would take whatever consequences would come from the Mob. Fuck them. He would not be their hit man.

Events, however, intervened.

Posner: At 10:19, while still lounging in the apartment in his underwear, he received a telephone call from his dancer Karen Carlin . . . "I have called, Jack, to try to get some money, because the rent is due and I need some money for groceries and you told me to call." Ruby asked how much she needed, and she said \$25. He offered to go downtown and send it to her by Western Union, but told her it would "take a little while to get dressed . . ."⁴⁰

Then he went out. It was a little before 11:00 A.M., and on his way he drove past Dealey Plaza and began to cry once more.

Of course, if you have been debating with yourself for close to forty-eight hours whether you are or are not going to pull a trigger, and either way death or utter ruin stands before you, you might cry too at every reminder of where you are. Which is that you didn't take your last opportunity at 10:00 A.M.

Oswald, however, has not yet been transferred. Fritz has decided to let the press have one more look at him. A photo opportunity!

Meantime, Ruby is at the Western Union office sending \$25 to his stripper. If his life is going to be smashed, he can at least do one last good deed.

Posner: . . . he patiently waited in line while another customer completed her business . . . When he got to the counter, the cost for sending the moneygram totaled \$26.87. He handed over \$30 and waited for his change while the clerk finished filling out the forms . . . Ruby's receipt was stamped 11:17. When he left Western Union, he was less than two hundred steps from the entrance to police headquarters.⁴¹

And about two hundred and fifty steps from dubious immortality.

MR. RUBY. [I] walked the distance from the Western Union to the ramp. I didn't sneak in. I didn't linger in there.

I didn't crouch or hide behind anyone, unless the television camera can make it seem that way . . .⁴²

Posner: On the third floor of the headquarters, police had informed Oswald shortly after 11:00 A.M. that they would immediately take him downstairs . . . He asked if he could change his clothes. Captain Fritz sent for some sweaters . . . If Oswald had not decided at the last moment to get a sweater, he would have left the jail almost five minutes earlier, while Ruby was still inside the Western Union office.⁴³

MR. RUBY. . . . I did not mingle with the crowd. There was no one near me when I walked down that ramp . . .⁴⁴

It is worth hearing the account of a plainclothesman named Archer, a detective on the Dallas force:

MR. ARCHER. . . . I could see the detectives on each side of Oswald leading him towards the ramp . . . I did have some bright lights shining into my eyes, and [it was hard] for me to recognize someone on the opposite side of the ramp [but] I caught a figure of a man. . . . I had been watching Oswald and the detectives . . . and my first thought was, as I started moving—well, my first thought was that somebody jumped out of the crowd, maybe to take a sock at him. Someone got emotion-

ally upset and jumped out to take a sock at him, [but] as I moved forward, I saw the man reach Oswald, raise up, and then the shot was fired.⁴⁵

MR. RUBY. . . . I realize it is a terrible thing I have done, and it was a stupid thing, but I just was carried away emotionally. Do you follow that?

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN. Yes; I do indeed, every word.

MR. RUBY. I had the gun in my right hip pocket, and impulsively, if that is the correct word here, I saw him, and that is all I can say. And I didn't care what happened to me.⁴⁶

The irony is that he was indeed impulsive. He has meditated upon the act since Friday; he has had his opportunities and not taken them. Now that he has lost his opportunity, or so he sees it, he has gravitated back to the police station. It has been the center of his activities for the last two days, after all. Yet, to his surprise, here and now is Oswald! It was as if God had put the man there. God was now giving the message: Jack Ruby was supposed to do it after all. So he fulfilled his contract. Let us say that he fulfilled two contracts. He did his job for the Mob, but since he had been talking about it so much that he had come to believe it, he did it as well for Jack, Jackie, the children, and the Jewish people. He fused himself into his all but unbelievable cover story and did it for Jackie Kennedy, after all.

To the Warren Commission, he describes his feelings with considerable style. Nothing is more difficult than to combine elegance with piety, but Jack has had seven months in jail to prepare this speech for Earl Warren:

. . . I wanted to show my love for our faith, being of the Jewish faith, and I never used the term and I don't want to go into that—suddenly the feeling, the emotional feeling came within me that someone owed this debt to our beloved President to save her the ordeal of coming back. I don't know why that came through my mind.⁴⁷

He had been less sanctimonious, however, right after his gun was seized on that terminal Sunday:

MR. ARCHER. . . . we took him on into the jail office and I assisted in keeping his left arm behind him and someone got his right. I couldn't say who it was that had his other arm. Laid him down on the floor, his head and face were away from me at that particular time. But that is when I said, "Who is he?" [He answered] "You all know me. I'm Jack Ruby." . . . And he said at that particular point, "I hope I killed the son of a bitch." . . . I said to Ruby at that time, "Jack, I think you killed him," and he just looked at me right straight in the eye and said, "Well, I intended to shoot him three times."⁴⁸

Posner: When they got to the third floor, Ruby, who was excited from the shooting, talked to anybody who came by. "If I had planned this I couldn't have had my timing better," he bragged. "It was one chance in a million. . . . I guess I just had to show the world that a Jew has guts." . . .⁴⁹

For forty and more hours before that, awake and asleep, he must have been castigating himself: You Jew, you do not have the guts to be a hit man—only Italians are that good. So he wanted to give the Mafia a real signature, his own—three shots—wanted to show the world that a Mob-style execution was not out of reach for him, a Jew.

The Parkland surgeons were not able to save Oswald:

Posner: "It's pretty hard to imagine one bullet doing more damage than that," says Dr. John Lattimer. "It perforated the chest cavity, went through the diaphragm, spleen, and stomach. It cut off the main intestinal artery, and the aorta, and the body's main vein, as well as breaking up the right kidney. That wound was definitely fatal."⁵⁰

Jack Ruby would wear brass knuckles when he got into a fight in his nightclub. He would brag to his handyman, Larry Crafard, that he had been with every girl in his club, and yet . . . and yet . . . As with Oswald, there is always more to Ruby.

MRS. CARLIN. . . . He was always asking the question, "Do you think I am a queer? Do you think I look like a queer? Or have you ever known a queer to look like me?" Everytime I saw him he would ask it.

MR. JACKSON. Do you mean he would bring up the subject himself?

MRS. CARLIN. Yes; he would say, "Do you think I look like one or act like one?"⁵¹

A man of many sides—he loved his animals:

Posner: His favorite dog, Sheba, was left in the car. "People that didn't know Jack will never understand this," Bill Alexander told the author, "but Ruby would never have taken that dog with him and left it in the car if he knew he was going to shoot Oswald and end up in jail. He would have made sure that dog was at home with Senator and was well taken care of."⁵²

Yes, Posner must be absolutely right that Ruby was not planning to kill Oswald on Sunday at 11:21 A.M. But that does not take care of why Ruby finally—for reasons considerably closer to his heart than the pain and turmoil awaiting Jacqueline Kennedy—did the deed and threw the cloak of a thousand putative conspiracies over the mystery of Lee Harvey Oswald, his life and his death.

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~~WALKER~~
A Visit to the Lubyanka

with each other. Thus was years after Stalin's time, ten years later, but contact with the Organs evoked fear. They could take you somewhere. You might not return home.

His own family had suffered. In the Thirties. During the civil war, his grandfather had served as an officer in Tukhachevsky's army, so naturally, when they arrested that General in the late Thirties, this affected his grandfather as well. Kostya grew up hearing about interrogations conducted in Stalin's time.

So when Kostya walked through the front door of the building, his legs were weak. But, actually, it proved to be only a short conversation: What sort of relationship had he had with Alik, and had he corresponded with Alik and Marina? He was able to reply in the negative. They did not ask him whether he had ever slept with Marina. This man who was interrogating him sat down at a desk and Kostya stood. There was someone else present, also in civilian clothes, but Kostya didn't know whether he was taking notes or not—never dared to look in that direction.

The man questioning him wanted to know if Kostya possessed photographs of Alik and Marina. He had had a few, but by now they were ashes in his stove.

Because Yuri and Kostya and Sasha had been certain that there was official surveillance of Alik and Marina after those two made a decision to go to America, they stopped visiting them. But Erich didn't. He remained Oswald's friend. Could it be, the American interviewers now asked Kostya, that Titovets had had some special relation to Oswald? To which Kostya replied that Erich had managed to keep everything he wrote during that period. Everyone else had his papers confiscated or took pains to destroy them, so Kostya was surprised when Erich said, "You all ran. You hid like a bunch of cowards and threw everything overboard." But, Kostya asked, why was Erich so brave? One could only guess how he had been able to keep his papers.

In any case, it seems to Kostya that, in this period after the assassination, Erich should have been shaken like a pear tree. Yet, he got out of it; nothing really happened to him, even though he had had the closest relationship with Alik.

As for his present opinion of Oswald, Igor Ivanovich said, "Lee was the scum of society, a person spoiled from the cradle, so to say. Not serious. Inconstant. Something was probably wrong with his state of mind."

Igor Ivanovich was asked, "After the assassination, you must have felt bad?"

And he replied, "Bad? I felt horrible. In fact, it was the worst moment of my life."

When asked if KGB had interrogated any of their prime sources after the assassination, Igor Ivanovich suddenly became emotional. He looked as if he might burst into tears. He did not answer the question. Instead, he cried out: "Everybody blames me for this! It was as if I knew he would shoot." After a minute or two, he added, "We had no data. You could not find one single person from Minsk who would say, 'Yes, Oswald had these intentions to go back to America and cause all this trouble.'"

He and Stepan had tried to consider where they could have failed. Their inner fear: "What if the preparation of this action commenced in Minsk?" They were considering everything.

Then he added, "Quite frankly, we were not worried about public opinion in America. We worried about what Moscow would say once we sent them Oswald's file. Would they consider our job well done or poor? That was what we worried about."

When Stepan Vasilyevich heard the announcement on the radio, his second thoughts, after first saying to himself, "It's impossible!" were more complex. As more news arrived from various broadcasts, he came to a conclusion that Oswald could not have done it alone. Oswald had been sucked into it somehow. Because a single fact was being exploited—that Oswald had been in the Soviet Union. A convenient shield for certain people! "Their mass media started blaming everything on our Soviet Union. My opinion is that it was all sewn together with white threads. To cover their tracks in this crime."

When asked how long it took for word to come from Moscow that they wanted Oswald's file, Stepan's reply was that Moscow Center's request came late on that night of November 22. Igor Ivanovich was given an order, and he told Stepan to take ~~the~~ Lee's file to Moscow. Gather it together and leave.

No preparations were necessary. Both men knew Oswald's materials well, and the file had been stored in the archives of their building. So, all Stepan had to do was take it out, put it in a sack, sign for it, and leave. He used a gray mailbag, the kind used for sending quantities of mail, and the file was not large enough to fill it.

Then, Stepan flew to Moscow on November 23, and arrived at Lyubertsy Airport, accompanied by another KGB man from Minsk, who was armed. It was not a regular flight, since Moscow wanted it quickly, but there were two seats open on a military plane.

When asked if he was very nervous, he said, "I don't think so. I didn't feel any guilt. I was pure as crystal. What could I be afraid of? Of course, it was a tragic situation. But being nervous, hands shaking, so forth—why? I was flying to our Center in Moscow with a clean conscience. I didn't have any excessive emotions or anything like that. I just thought about what sort of questions they would ask. And I had only one answer: Oswald did not have any undisclosed relation to our agency. What worried me more was whether official people would be there to meet me at Lyubertsy Airport because, otherwise, how would I get to Moscow on public transport?"

He did not have to worry. Official people greeted him right away, introduced themselves, showed their identification, and they all drove off. It was an overcast day, but no rain, no snow. Gray.

They went to the main building, to Lubyanka, drove directly into the edifice, and were received by higher-ups. Stepan thought it might be the Assistant Director of KGB. He didn't know these high officers personally. It was his first visit to Moscow Center, and this legendary building, Lubyanka, was full of labyrinths. He had to follow closely behind whoever was walking in front of him, down endless narrow halls. A thin red carpet ran the entire length of each long hall.

Later he would go to Lubyanka many times on business trips, so he was able to find his way along some of these halls, but he can't say he ever got it all down. You could go there and go there and still get lost. If he had to get out of that building on his own, he might lose his way. From the exterior, it was a large building of yellow stone, but inside it was strange, with these narrow corridors. In Minsk, their corridors were wide and you could walk more freely.

When he finally was led to the appropriate office, several people were waiting for him in a reasonably large room, but there wasn't anything on their table. He doesn't know if it was in their American Division or some other department, but Stepan merely said, "According to your instructions, our file on Oswald is now delivered." And they said, "Good, just leave it here."

Their first question came: "Did you attempt to recruit Oswald?" He said, "You can cut off my head, but not only did we not try to,

this very thought did not even enter our minds. Read these documents. It's very clear in which direction we were working. In accordance with your instructions."

He looked at them and noticed that they practically sighed with relief. He wasn't worried about their believing him, because the documents made it clear what kind of work they had been doing. You couldn't falsify something like that. Of course, Stepan was somewhat disturbed, but he had no large fears. These documents made it clearly visible how they had been conducting their operation.

Afterward, when slanders concerning the Soviet Union kept circulating, he thought maybe Nikita Sergeivich Khrushchev would give these files to the American government. All these American rumors would then burst like a soap bubble. But it didn't happen.

On this day, at this meeting on November 23, 1963, they invited him to sit down; they were polite. He remembers he even tried to stand up, and they said, "Sit down, sit down," but there was nothing on their table, no tea. He doesn't recall whose picture was on the wall, maybe it had been Dzherzhinsky, but no flag—that, he would have noticed. And the room was brightly lit. The last thing they said was, "Leave this file. And thank you. Your mission is over. We'll organize a return ticket for you."

He took a regular night train back to Minsk with the same fellow he had taken off with. Before leaving, they strolled around Moscow and went shopping. He bought something for his children.

On his return trip, Stepan didn't have special thoughts. If Oswald had been CIA, he could not have done any more in Minsk than gather information in a contemplative way, not manifesting anything, not being an active agent. He could have studied Soviet life, and then disclosed such information later in America. Such a version could not be excluded. As much could be said for any foreigner who spent two years in the Soviet Union. "Besides, when Oswald came to Minsk in January 1960, Kennedy wasn't yet elected President. So, Oswald could not have been sent with such a goal in mind."

If Stepan had any troubled thoughts on his return trip, therefore, it was not over his own performance. He explored various scenarios, thoughts came into his head, various versions appeared, but in the end he said to himself, "Ach, it's time to go to bed. Americans cooked it up. Let them figure it out."

When he got home, which was Sunday morning, it was still Saturday night in Dallas, so Oswald would not be ambushed by Ruby

for another ten hours; about six in the afternoon on Sunday in Minsk is when Stepan would receive that word. When he returned, therefore, on Sunday morning around eight o'clock, the first thing he did was go to his home to shave. Leaving in such a hurry for Moscow, he had not taken his toilet kit. He washed, then had something to eat and went straight to work, where he reported to his superiors. People, of course, were talking about it in the building. Everyone was listening to radios. Even then, a lot of his colleagues did not know he had worked on this case, but everyone's opinion was stirred up. After all, it was a shadow on Minsk.

People who knew Oswald immediately said Alik couldn't have done it. So said people who knew him.

Even many people who didn't have contact with the fellow didn't believe it: We're getting along with America a little bit better, so now all this business?

They didn't do further analysis. Their file was in Moscow; they didn't have materials. Besides, what could they have analyzed any further? When the file came back from Moscow some twenty-seven years later, nothing had been removed or commented upon; everything was there as he recalled it, certified and signed by him. Stepan was asked why then had Igor Ivanovich reacted so strongly as to say, "Everyone blames me," but Stepan indicated that Igor was a more sensitive person than he was.

2
Veracity

The bulk of the interviews in Minsk had been completed, but the interviewers still had one large problem. It was whether to give any credence to Yuri Merezhinsky's account of his relations with Marina. If she was anywhere near as promiscuous as he stated, then all interpretations of her life with Lee Harvey Oswald would be colored by such information: It would suggest a different subtext to her marriage than what had emerged from her account of their difficulties.

November and December 1963

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1 Patience was to prove an operative word. My affair with Kittredge did not commence for another six years, and then, for several years we would meet once a week, or sometimes, given the demands of circumspection, no more than once a month, until the dreadful hour when Hugh and Christopher took their tragic fall, and we were wed in the haunted ravine of that event.

All this lay ahead. I was to live for a long time with the shock of the assassination in my heart and in my bones, and it was even in the air I breathed at Langley, until time reduced at last my sense of that momentous catastrophe and it blended into the history and whispers of the halls, the weight of the fact now no greater than itself—another impost on the guilt of our lives.

Harlot, however, turned unrelenting in his powers of exaggeration. He knew the seed of consternation that now dwelt in the taproot of many an Agency dream; he memorialized The Day. He ended with a monologue I was to hear more than once, if always with different and most specially chosen associates.

"On that unique Friday afternoon, November 22, 1963," was the way Harlot usually began, "I can tell you that we all

congregated in the Director's meeting room on the Seventh Floor for a bit of summitry, all of us, satraps, mandarins, lords paramount, padishahs, maharajahs, grand moguls, kingfish, the lot.

"And we sat there," said Harlot. "It's the only time in all these years that I saw so many brilliant, ambitious, resourceful men—just sitting there. Finally McCone said, 'Who is this Oswald?' And there was a World Series *silence*. The sort you hear when the visiting team has scored *eight runs* in the first inning.

"Let us not try to measure the gloom. We could have been bank directors just informed that a time bomb was ticking away in the vault. Everybody's safety box has to be emptied. But you don't even know at this point how much you have to hide. I began to think of some of the very worst of our people. Bill Harvey over in Rome. Boardman Hubbard in Paris with ~~that~~ *Cubela* ~~LASH~~. Suppose Fidel produces Cubela? The mind runs amok at such times. Everyone was inhaling everyone else's ghosts. We were waiting for the little details concerning Oswald to commence belaboring our wits. My God, this man Oswald went to Russia after working at Atsugi Air Base in Japan. Isn't that where they tested the U-2? Then this Oswald dares to come back from Russia! Who debriefed him? Which one of us has been into him? Does it even matter? Our common peril may be even more embracing than our individual complicity. Cannot, oh, cannot someone do *something* about Oswald? No one utters the thought aloud. We are too many. We break up our meeting. It has congealed, after all, into silence. We meet all night in twos and threes. Information keeps coming in. Worse and worse. Marina Oswald, the Russian wife—that's how new it all was, we didn't say 'Marina' but 'Marina Oswald, the Russian wife'—has an uncle who is a Lieutenant Colonel in the MVD. Then we hear that George de Mohrenschildt, whom some of us happen to know, a most cultivated contract type, has been Oswald's closest friend in Dallas. My God, George de Mohrenschildt could be earning French money, German money, Cuban money, maybe de Mohrenschildt is earning our money. Who is paying him? Where *did* Oswald hang his hat? None of us goes home for the weekend. We may be enjoying our last hours at Langley. Then comes Sunday afternoon. The news rings around the corridors.

Blessed relief. Dead leaves waltz in the garden. A marvelous hoodlum by the gemlike name of Jack Ruby has just killed Oswald. Stocky Jack Ruby can't bear the thought of Jacqueline Kennedy's sufferings at a public trial. We haven't encountered a man so chivalrous since the War of the Roses. The mood on the Seventh Floor is now like the last reel of a film by Lubitsch. We hardly keep back the twinkles. I've always said since: *I like* Jack Ruby. The fellow who paid his debts. The only matter not settled to my absolute satisfaction is whether it was Trafficante or Marcello or Hoffa or Giancana or Roselli who sent the bill.

"In any event, we are home free. There will now be mess enough to smudge the record forever. I remember divining the outcome on that very Sunday night. I asked myself: Who has nothing to fear should the real story come out? That is a list to pursue. The Republicans have to be worried: Their right-wing Texas tycoons could be involved. The liberals must be close to primitive fright. Castro, even if he is innocent, cannot speak for all the elements in DGI. Helms has the Mafia to contemplate, plus rogue elephants, plus our malcontents at JM/WAVE. By definition, one cannot account for an enclave. Yes, CIA might have much to lose. So might the Pentagon. What if we discover that the Soviets were steering Oswald? One can't have a nuclear war just because an Irish *arriviste* got bumped off by the Reds. And what if it is the anti-Castro Cubans in Miami? A damn good likelihood after all. That will bring us back to the Republicans, to Nixon, the lot. No, not quite the lot. A skilled Vietnamese gunman might be avenging his dead ruler, Diem. The Kennedy gang can't afford exposure on that one, can they? Corrosion of the legend might work its way down to the martyr's bier. And then there is the FBI. How can they allow any of these suppositions to be examined? Each one suggests a conspiracy. It is not to Buddha's interest to advertise to the world that the FBI is singularly incompetent at detecting conspiracies they do not hatch themselves. No, none of this is in the interest of supposedly omniscient, wide-bottom Buddha. Oswald, as the sole killer, is, therefore, in everyone's best service—KGB, FBI, CIA, DGI, Kennedys, Johnsons, Nixons, Mafia, Miami Cubans, Castro Cubans, even the Goldwater gang. What if a John Bircher did it? I can feel the furor in the veins of every conspirator who ever

talked about killing Jack Kennedy. They can hardly trust themselves not to have done it even when they know they didn't; after all, how can any one of them vouch for all their friends? A broth of disinformation has been on the stove ever since. I knew that we would enter upon a most prestigious investigation that would prove a model of sludge. So, I decided to save myself much untold watching of the pots, and moved right back to serious work where one can make a perceptible dent."

Whether Harlot was actually calling upon his powers of detachment that Sunday night sixty hours after the assassination, or summarizing what he had learned in the months that followed, I, in my turn, was not able to summarize the situation. I was mired in the death. If obsession is a species of mourning for all the fears we bury in unhallowed ground—the unhallowed ground, that is, of our psyche—then I was obsessed. The death of Marilyn Monroe would not leave my mind. If, according to my father, Hoffa could conceive of such a crime in order to leave an unstanachable political wound in both Kennedys, then how many people could I name who might be ready to kill Jack in order to ignite a war against Fidel Castro?

Harlot might have recognized that no pattern can be pulled from such a porridge, but I did not. I lay captive to the velocity of my mind and it raced around the track on many a night. I thought often of Howard Hunt and his deep friendship with Manuel Artime. Hunt had the time, the opportunity—did he have the depth of rage? He might, by way of Artime, have a line into the most violent members of the Brigade. When my mind wore out from asking questions about Hunt, I moved on to brood about Bill Harvey. I went so far as to check on whether he had left Rome on that particular Friday in November. He had not. Then I realized it did not matter. One could run such an operation from Rome. Or could one? And where was Dix Butler? Was he already in Vietnam, or had he stopped over in Dallas? I could not determine that. I also wondered whether Castro, by way of Trafficante, had succeeded in one assassination where we had failed in many. There were hours in those sleepless nights when I could not keep from picturing Oswald and his narrow, tortured, working-class face. Oswald had been down to Mexico City in September. Cal showed me a memo.

Headquarters at Langley had cabled Mexico Station for the names of all contacts of the two leading KGB men at the Russian Embassy in Mexico City. Station came back with their response. The taps on the Cuban Embassy and the Russian Embassy produced Oswald's name and Rolando Cubela's. Oswald had even made a phone call from the Cuban Embassy to the Soviet Embassy. In a harsh and highly ungrammatical Russian, the man who called himself Oswald had insisted on speaking to "Comrade Kostikov."

"That's dubious," said Cal. "We know that Oswald spoke Russian well."

"And Cubela?"

"Ah, Cubela. He had talks with Comrade Kostikov. We don't know what about. I expect he has contacts with everyone."

"We've dropped him, of course."

"Heavens, yes." Cal shrugged. "In any event, it's over. The FBI is going to tell us that Oswald acted alone."

Had J. Edgar Hoover done it?

My thoughts did not rest. One day, during the hearings of the Warren Commission, Chief Justice Warren inquired of Allen Dulles, "The FBI and the CIA do employ undercover men who are of terrible character?" And Allen Dulles, in all the bonhomie of a good fellow who can summon up the services of a multitude of street ruffians, replied, "Yes, terribly bad characters."

"That has to be one of Allen's better moments," remarked Hugh Montague.

I was at the point where I was ready to believe that Allen Dulles did it. Or Harlot. Or, in the great net of implication, Cal and I might be guilty as well. Thoughts raced. I had not yet approached my first piece of universal wisdom: There are no answers—there are only questions.

Of course, some questions have to be better than others.

Nov 29, 1963

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From VANITY FAIR

(7)

Earl and Lyndon

(800)

A One-Act Play

[They are alone in the Oval Office.]

LYNDON: Sitting here and meditating, Chief Justice, on the horrible and heart-rending events of last week, I've come to realize we haven't had ten minutes of private conversation between you and me in all these many years of your service in Washington, yet there is nobody in our three branches of government to whom I am ready to tender more respect.

EARL: That's a most generous remark, Mr. President, and I thank you for it.

LYNDON: I want to relieve any uneasiness you might feel over this meeting. I can certainly understand your demurrers this morning. Katzenbach and Archie Cox trotted right back here after their session with you, and they briefed me on your objections. So, it is clear to me why, in all sincerity, you feel that you cannot head up my proposed commission of inquiry into Jack's death. There is a solemn heft to your logic in these reservations. I believe I comprehend. For the Supreme Court to function at the highest level, relations among you nine renowned men must remain collegial, yessir. And that,

I now recognize, depends on unvoiced agreements with your brethren. I do indeed comprehend. Without the mutual if unspoken understanding that none of you will accept outside tasks, you nine supreme judges, under the most parlous circumstances, could return, even *revert*, to emotions some of you used to feel, maybe could have felt, before you donned the robes back in those days when you were but nine high-powered lawyers. You do not have to tell me. I know. It figures. A Supreme Court justice has to be highly principled, but it does cut to the quick if one of his brothers should take on some outside role or function that might be viewed as more prestigious by the world of opinion. Hell, there's not supposed to be anything more important than a seat on the Supreme Court, so what is one leaving it for?

EARL: Mr. President, that is what I attempted to convey this morning to Mr. Katzenbach and Mr. Cox, and I see that they relayed my sentiments on to you most accurately, whereupon you have enriched them with your personal interpretation.

LYNDON: That's what it is all about. Before you start to look at a problem, try to see it through the other man's eyes.

EARL: Can I count, therefore, on your full understanding of why, this morning, I did have to decline the honor of serving as chairman of your presidential commission?

LYNDON: You can bet I understood, Chief Justice. I know what you believe in. I honor your work. That is why I

appreciate your flexibility in coming over here this afternoon after you said no this morning.

EARL: I had to. You are the president of the United States. Who can conceive of all you have had to bear up under in the last seven days?

LYNDON: Let me ~~not~~ ^{give assent} ~~most lugubri-~~ously to that. Last Friday, November 22, 1963, Jack Kennedy was alive. Today, he is one week deceased. From a Friday to a Friday. Mortality feels as close to me at this moment as the palm of my hand if you had just stripped off the skin. I think of Jack all the time. I speak to him in my dreams. "Keep it afloat," he says to me, "keep this mighty republic seaworthy." "I will try to, Jack," I tell him.

EARL: There is no way for us to cease thinking about it. My daughter came into my study on Sunday and said, "Daddy, Lee Harvey Oswald has just been shot." "Oh, Lord, Dorothy," I told her, "don't repeat such rumors." "Daddy," she said, "it's not a rumor. I just saw him shot on television."

LYNDON: There you are. Chief Justice, the nation is in an unparalleled situation. The crazy house has come to town. Nothing like it since the death of Abraham Lincoln. Worse perhaps. We are desperately in need of greatness. Earl—I want to call you Earl—have you ever applied your mind to the concept of what is a great American?

EARL: Mr. President, I muse about that sometimes.

LYNDON: I ponder it all the time. Being a great American goes to the essence of why I asked you over here

no italics

today. The human dimensions of any great American are, in my opinion, poorly comprehended. In fact, the public attitude partakes of condescension. Most people believe that a great man is *born*. Period. That's all. Fate takes care of his greatness thereafter. What the hell, he is destined to become great. I say there's more to Abraham Lincoln than predestination. I'll offer you my concept: The great American is a man ready to search out a way through the labyrinths of hell. He is a master of the rite of passage. He can deal with the illimitable corruptibility of the human spirit, yet not turn corrupt himself. That is no ordinary feat. Lord, no! It is the most isolated goddamn condition in the world. It is a true abyss of isolation. Earl, you and I inhabit that vast and empty place. There can't be many people in America who know what is incumbent upon our position. 'Cause we are the ones who make the decisions nobody else wants to get near to, not when the responsibility is cosmically large, and there is no one with whom to share your awesome doubts. We are the two loneliest men in the country. I wish to salute you.

EARL: I've found only one formula. It's to keep my eye on the target and stay at my allotted task. It's to keep on maintaining the collegiality of my eight brothers. It is my belief that the Supreme Court, when convening properly, offers a great sense of peace, security, and wise decision to our American people.

LYNDON: I hear every word you say. I hear every word you say. Nonetheless, I

must reply: Earl, this nation needs you to set out on a long and perilous journey. You must go into the uncharted and the unknown.

EARL: I'm not here to argue with a president of the United States...I wouldn't know how.

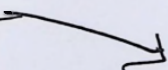
LYNDON: You don't have to. We are engaged in a process of reasoning together. I maintain that incredible times can call for the temporary suspension of our best and most time-honored axioms, precedents, and judgments. This hour might just be one of those rare occasions. Only two of us in this room, right?

EARL: You and me.

LYNDON: Just you and me.

EARL: I believe you see the situation as urgent.

LYNDON: Worse than urgent. The situation is critical. Earl, I am going to lay my cards out. I will conceal nothing. The murder of President Kennedy was a terrible deed, but most of us could kind of comprehend it. To some degree. We could see how one crazy young man could do it. We all know crazy young men. It's a nice family doesn't have such a fellow in the back room. But then Jack Ruby came along two days later. We may never recover from the death he inflicted. The echoes reverberated around the world. Out in the grass huts of Africa and in the rice paddies of Southeast Asia, they now share one belief. It is that John Fitzgerald Kennedy was not killed by a crazy man who in turn was killed by *another* crazy man. No, they see it as a conspiracy. You have to know what that does to the credibility of this country. We are stagger-



ing around with an open wound which has ominous potential. At this moment, down in Texas, the state and local Dallas authorities are getting ready to hold their public investigation with television coverage. Earl, I love Texas, but I have to recognize that it has more polecats per capita than any other state in the union. Venality is as common as ~~as~~ ^{conspire} down there. A Texas commission! It cannot fail to be self-serving, inflammatory, and dishonest. The U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives are whipping themselves up equally for high-spotlight investigations. We will have a Tower of Babel. Can we afford it? Earl, my dogs tell me that you are the man to save this situation. You are respected around the world. Even those French intellectuals who don't cotton to

anything they haven't thought of first respect the hell out of you. So I don't want to hear about collegiality. Because you were a soldier in World War I, right, a first lieutenant, infantry, correct? There wasn't anything you weren't ready to do for that uniform. Well, I'll inform you, there was nothing you could ever do then in that uniform comparable to what you can do for your country right now in this hour of trouble. Earl, we must have a commission headed by a man whom the people of this globe will trust: a Warren Commission. Because the gravity of the situation is such that it could all lead to war. I spoke last night to McNamara. Know what our secretary of defense gave me for his estimate? A nuclear first strike dropped on us would cause the loss of

(in the High Court)

40 million Americans. Don't even count the dead that our retaliation would produce in Soviet Europe and Asia.

EARL: Mr. President, should the situation be as serious as you say, then my personal views may not have the right to prevail.

LYNDON: That is precisely what I was hoping to hear you say.

EARL: But is it truly that serious? Are we not reacting to the prodigious impact of the shock?

LYNDON: Earl, on the basis of what you know, that is a reasonable remark. But there is dire stuff that you don't know. Which I am ready to tell. But I can't. No, I can't until you are ready to come on board.

EARL: You are saying that I have to take what could become one of the largest steps in my life entirely on faith?

LYNDON: On faith. On faith in me, Earl. It is that serious, it is that confidential. I am your president, and I give you my vow that the situation could most certainly lead to war. My vow, Earl, not my promise. Now, in turn, I need your vow that you are wholeheartedly on board.

EARL: Mr. President, out of respect for your vow, I have to recognize that there is no choice. I am bound, I see, to accept this commission.

LYNDON: Bless you. Bless your kin. Because now I can reveal that which is concealed, and thereby get you to feel a little more wholehearted about your acceptance.

EARL: I would appreciate that.

LYNDON: Speak not only to the mind of a judge, but to his heart.

EARL: Shakespeare?

LYNDON: Texas. Old Texas talk. Speak not only to the mind of a judge, but to his belly. Here, in the capital, I amend it to "heart," but "belly" is about as apt. If you can't digest a case, you can't honor your own ruling. You can't say "So found" in a good voice when there's butterflies in your gut.

EARL: I would call that de facto, Mr. President.

LYNDON: Good. We comprehend each other. We can get down to the gist of things. There's a hell of a lot of talk going on in this country right now that the Russians did it. The rest of the world is offering a lot of equally loose talk that some of us Americans did it. Why? So we could start a war with Russia. That's a built-in drama of nuclear escalation.

EARL: Don't we know that Oswald did it? Can't we arrive at such a conclusion without doubt?

LYNDON: No, sir. Oswald is the wild hair right in the orifice of the problem. To the Russians he does not seem to be just a little dodo with half-assed radical opinions. From their point of view, he is kind of sinister. God Almighty, they had to wonder what was up when he defected to the Soviets in Moscow. Look at Oswald from their point of view. A former U.S. Marine! And he used to work in radar spotting at Atsugi air base near Tokyo. Did you know that the air force was squirreling away a secret plane on that base, and it happened to be nothing less than the U-2, the same U-2 that Francis Gary Powers bailed out of in 1960. Just think how the

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K.G.B. reacted when Oswald showed up in Moscow in 1959 with the information that the U-2 used to report in to Atsugi at seventy-five angels.

EARL: Seventy-five thousand feet high?

LYNDON: Exactly. That was highly privileged information in October 1959. You can bet the Soviets looked askance at this ex-Marine who walks in. Just assume you are K.G.B., Earl. They are asked to believe that this particular radar operator on a secret air base in Japan was allowed by the C.I.A., naval intelligence, air-force intelligence, the F.B.I., and the State Department to take a trip to Russia? The K.G.B. had to be convinced Oswald was an agent planted by us.

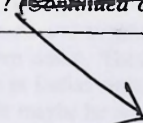
EARL: Are you saying he was?

LYNDON: Ask, but ye shall not find—our intelligence people are still searching their files. By God, you don't think they can afford to admit they got ~~anyone~~ caught in the wringer, do you? Earl, Oswald *was* or *was not* working for U.S. intelligence, but nothing you can work with is going to surface in a hurry.

EARL: You are asserting, then, that the K.G.B. saw Lee Harvey Oswald as some kind of intelligence agent for us?

LYNDON: They had to, Earl. They must have had a dozen of their people following his every step. Why, that Russian girl he married might have had to report to them. Who knows? For whatever reason, he comes back with her and their baby. But how does he get back? Why do we let him in? Who is keeping those files now? Which organ of us? Or them? ~~(Continued on page 360)~~

one of their tits



~~(Continued from page 808) What was the~~
K.G.B. doing after he came back? Earl,
this is one of those events where all the
roads intersect. ~~There's a fellow named De~~
~~Mohrenschildt. In the last fifteen years, he~~
~~has probably worked for five or six intelli-~~
~~gence services. He was Oswald's best~~
~~friend in Dallas. I expect that Oswald was~~
under so much pressure from so many intel-
ligence agencies he probably wasn't even
sure his own mind was still loyal to him.
Earl, those fellows in intelligence are now
wondering if they were the ones who drove
him crazy enough to kill the president.

EARL: Yes, one can sense the repercus-
sions.

LYNDON: No, it's worse than that. Fidel
Castro could have done it.

EARL: He couldn't have. He would nev-
er have been so mad.

LYNDON: Maybe not, but Fidel don't
know what his people were doing any
more than we know what our people were
doing. Earl, never let the next revelation
leave your lips. This is as top-secret as it
is going to get. I was briefed the other day
in the most profound atmosphere of con-
tainment. The C.I.A. made eight attempts
to kill Fidel. Now, whoever was telling
them to do it, the point is, Fidel was going
to perceive all that as coming from Ken-
nedy. Bad enough? Earl, that is not the
bottom of the pit.

EARL: Not?

LYNDON: The C.I.A. was employing the
Mafia to do the job on Castro. All the
while that Bobby Kennedy was trying to
slam Jimmy Hoffa and Carlos Marcello
into jail, we were running a goddamn
Murder Incorporated in the Caribbean.
There is no end to what the Mafia might
have been doing. They could have had a
gunman in Dallas sitting right next to Os-
wald. Or maybe he was staked out behind

that fence overlooking Elm Street. But we can't nail the Mafia to the wall. They know too much.

EARL: I can see how delicate it will be to unearth the facts.

LYNDON: Earl, we cannot allow ourselves to get interested in facts.

EARL: What have I agreed to? Can I bear to keep to such an agreement?

LYNDON: It's awesome in the abyss. But here we are, Earl. Your vow has matched my vow. And here we are. We simply cannot allow the imputation that Oswald was any kind of intelligence agent. Earl, your commission may have to tread a long road, but you are bound to discover that Oswald was just a poor lonely guy who killed the president on his lonesome, alas, and Jack Ruby was a highly disturbed but chivalrous individual who didn't want Jackie Kennedy to be obliged to testify in court.

EARL: You are asking me to commit acts I have never engaged in before. Acts I despise.

LYNDON: Bullshit, Earl! Nobody is as honest as they believe themselves to be. Show me a lawyer who hasn't steered a case.

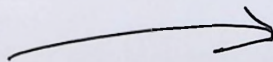
EARL: This is not a case. This is a fact-finding commission at the highest level.

LYNDON: Well, you are here and I am here to protect this country. We are sitting on a powder keg installed in a latrine. If that barrel ever blows, this nation will be subjected to ~~unconscionable~~ ~~spew~~. I warned you, Earl. I am looking for a great American.

EARL: You are asking me to contravene the purpose of the commission which will bear my name.

LYNDON: Yes, and I am asking you in the name of a higher purpose. I want you to protect our nation. We have a half-stable public out there. It pays never to forget that we Americans are the rejected of the earth. They didn't want us over there.

fifty million tons
of gas-know-what! I



in Europe, so we came here. Nobody was around to groom us. We had to learn how to sprout on the soil available. No skillful hands tended us. We grew up as weeds, therefore, and as weeds did this great nation develop. So, we wish to survive. If my roots have got to strangle your roots in order for me to stay alive, well then, don't bother to look, it's a done deed.

EARL: That is a full description of ruthlessness.

LYNDON: We are here to reassure the populace. That has become our mightiest function. Earl, I will be blunt. You have to dead-ass the inquiry. You have to slide the facts around. By that means, you can give us what we need—a world that makes sense. Because everybody understands lonely people who go crazy for no reason. It'll get us feeling right about things again. Face up, buddy, you have to go in the tank.

EARL: Go in the tank? If there is a heaven, I hope it is not hearing us now.

LYNDON: Heaven approves of this, Earl. It's all right. You can take the dive. Hypocrisy has its own integrity. You will find that you shit better when this is all over. That is my private guarantee.

[He puts his arm around Warren's shoulders and walks him out of the room.]

From *The New York Times*, February 5, 1964:

Yesterday, in discussing whether testimony taken by the commission would be made public, Mr. Warren said: "Yes, there will come a time. But it might not be in your lifetime. I am not referring to anything especially, but there may be some things that involve security. This would be preserved but not made public." □

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shooting at Kennedy because he liked him or disliked him—that would be irrelevant to the depth of his deed.

The focus has then shifted. Recognizing that one only argues this point in the likelihood that Oswald is guilty rather than as a found conclusion, what then happened to be the real intent of his deed?

~~Chambers~~ A Hero to Himself

~~The answer speaks out of our understanding of him~~ It was the largest opportunity he had ever been offered.

The assassination of a President would be seismographic in its effect. For Americans, the aftershocks would not cease for the rest of the century or more. Yet he would also be punishing the Russians and the Cubans. They would suffer side effects for decades to come. But then, he was above capitalism and he was above Communism. Both! He had, as he would have seen it, a superior dedication, and the potential of a man like Lenin. If we know that he had none of Lenin's capacity to achieve large goals both philosophically and organizationally, Oswald did hold an equally intense belief in that fabulous end which would justify all his quotidian means. His deepest despair had to arise in those moments when he could not see himself any longer as the key protagonist in forging a new world.

Given his humiliation in Mexico and his lack of stature on weekends in Irving, the odds are that Oswald's political ideology had finally come to rest in the live nerve of nihilism—things had to get vastly worse before they could get better. We can refer ourselves back to that note he wrote on Holland-America Line stationery even as he may have been returning to America:

I wonder what would happen if someone would stand up and say he was utterly opposed not only to the governments, but to the people. to the entire land and complete founda-

Give me sleep

tion of his society

All the motivation for shooting Kennedy is in that sentence. It may be worth quoting from *Mein Kampf* again:

Even then I saw that only a twofold road could lead to the goal of improving these conditions:

The deepest sense of social responsibility for the creation of better foundations for our development coupled with brutal determination in breaking down incurable tumors. [Hitler's italics]²

Kennedy had the ability to give hope to the American ethos. That was, therefore, cause enough to call upon "brutal determination in breaking down incurable tumors." Kennedy was not, as American Presidents went, a bad President; therefore, he was too good. In the profoundest sense, as Oswald saw it, he had located the tumor—it was that Kennedy was too good. The world was in crisis and the social need was to create conditions for recognizing that there had to be a new kind of society. Otherwise, the malignant effects of capitalism, added to the Soviet degradation of Communism, were going to reduce people to the point where they lost all will to create a better world.

An explosion at the heart of the American establishment's complacency would be exactly the shock therapy needed to awaken the world.

It is doubtful that Oswald wanted to debate such a question with himself. He may well have possessed an instinct that told him he had to do something enormous and do it quickly, do it for his own physical well-being. The murderer kills in order to cure himself—which is why murder is properly repudiated. It is the most selfish of acts.

McMillan: . . . the uncanny selection of a route that would carry the President right under his window could mean only one thing. Fate had singled him out to do the dangerous but necessary task which had been his destiny all along and which would cause him to go down in history.³

Back in March, living on Neely Street, he had said in a letter to Robert Oswald, "It's always better to take advantage of your chances as they come along."⁴

Which may have been Oswald's way of saying that the intent of the universe is ready to reveal itself to us by the chances we are offered. Since the President would pass beneath his Book Deposi-

tory windows, he did not have the right to violate such a monumental opportunity. Could there be another person in the universe who had been more uniquely designed to take advantage of such a situation, "vouchsafed to *him*," writes McMillan,

to deal capitalism that final, mortal blow[?] And he would strike it not at the right nor at the left, but, quite simply, at the top. It had become his fate to decapitate the American political process. *He* was history's chosen instrument.⁵

The point absent here from Priscilla Johnson McMillan's interpretation is that after the assassination, Oswald had a choice. He might not only be the instrument but the leading man. That presented a new conflict—to be the instrument of history *or* the leading man? The latter could occur only if he was captured and stood trial. If he succeeded in the act but managed to remain undiscovered, obscurity would be his lot again. He had learned as much from his attempt on Walker.

Capture, however, would guarantee him a very high level of attention. And if he was convicted, he had the temperament to live alone in a cell; he was more than half habituated to that already. He could even view his life up to this point as a preparation for spending many years in prison.

Indeed, it may even have been the thought of his trial that fired him on. What a podium! Such a trial could alter history, stimulate the stupid, rouse the lethargic, confound the powerful. So he had to feel divided between his desire to escape and his recognition that capture, trial, and incarceration might generate a vastly larger destiny.

His personal attitude toward Kennedy had little to do, therefore, with his act. In war, one may execute a man for whom one feels respect or even personal affection; Oswald saw it as an execution. One mighty leader was going to be dispatched by another high and mighty personage—of the future. The future would preempt the present.

If he failed to escape, well, he could tell his story. He could becloud the issue and possibly be acquitted, and if it came to twenty years of prison, he would be able to forge his political agenda—even as Hitler, Stalin, and Lenin had done. Should he face capital punishment, then, at the least, he would be immortal

What he may never have taken into account is that the furies he set loose would devour him before he could utter one idea. The first element in the loss of an heroic trial became the four shots he fired into Tippit. There can be little doubt that he panicked. As soon as he killed Tippit, the mighty architecture of his ideology, hundreds of levels high and built with no more than the game cards of his political imagination, came tumbling down. He knew Americans well enough to recognize that some might listen to his ideas if he killed a President, but nearly all would be repelled by any gunman who would mow down a cop, a family man—that act was small enough to void interest in every large idea he wished to introduce. By killing Tippit he had wrecked his grand plan to be one of the oracles of history. Now he had to improvise a defense: I'm a patsy.

It may never have occurred to Oswald that the obfuscation and paranoia which followed the assassination of Kennedy would contribute immensely to the sludge and smog of the world's spirit.

Oswald may never have read Emerson, but the following passage from "Heroism" gives us luminous insight into what had to be Oswald's opinion of himself as he sat on the sixth floor waiting for the Kennedy motorcade—he was committing himself to the most heroic deed of which he was capable.

Self-trust is the essence of heroism. It is the state of the soul at war, and its ultimate objects are the last defiance of falsehood and wrong, and the power to bear all that can be inflicted by evil agents. [Heroism is] scornful of petty calculations and scornful of being scorned. It persists; it is of an undaunted boldness and of a fortitude not to be wearied out. Its jest is the littleness of common life. [Heroism] works in contradiction to the voice of mankind and in contradiction, for a time, to the voice of the great and good. Heroism is obedience to a secret impulse of an individual's character. Now to no other man can wisdom appear as it does to him, for every man must be supposed to see a little farther on his own proper path than anyone else [so] every heroic act measures itself by its contempt of some external good . . .⁶

It would have wounded Oswald to the quick if he had known that history would not see him as a hero but as an anti-hero. He went off to work that last morning, leaving the dregs of instant cof-

fee in a plastic cup, and in two days he ascended to the summit of our national obsessions—he became our First Ghost.

Oswald owned all the properties that belong to a ghost—ambition, deceit, a sense of mission, and the untold frustration of an abrupt death just as a long-held dream of personal prominence is about to unfold. Can there be any American of our century who, having failed to gain stature while he was alive, now haunts us more?

Let us give a word to Lee's brother John, whom he saw so seldom:

MR. PIC. Well, sir, ever since I was born and I was old enough to remember, I always had a feeling that some great tragedy was going to strike Lee in some way or another . . . In fact, on the very day of the assassination I was thinking about it when I was getting ready to go to work . . . and I figured well, when he defected and came back—that was his big tragedy. I found out it wasn't.⁷

5

The Widow's Elegy

First, Jacqueline Kennedy was a widow, and then Marina. As the second widow, she can no longer know what it is she knows. She has passed through thirty years of interviews, more than a thousand hours of interviews, and the questions never cease. She may be the last living smoker to consume four packs a day. How can it be otherwise? The past is filled with guilt—the future is full of dread. Only the present is clear; she always suspects the motives of the new people to whom she speaks. How innocent can be their motive for approaching? These days she feels that the walls are coming closer. If she starts thinking about what has happened to her, not with pity, she will cry, or sorrow for herself, but just hon-

ing to lessen stress, she feels she is choking. She still thinks of the night Lee sat in the dark on their porch in New Orleans and he was weeping. It was such a heavy burden for him. Something, and she does not know what it was.

It is hard for her to remember details. After her Warren Commission testimony, everybody accused her of lying, but she was just a human being and if she was lying, it was honestly—because she was floating through a foggy world. Memories kept coming, going. Maybe it was some self-protective mechanism. To keep her psyche from collapsing. People were saying to her, “You’re so strong”—but it was not heroic effort. “It is in every one of us—you just decide not to die, that’s all. You dare not to die.”

Now that she is fifty-two, Marina would agree that one doesn’t need to approach her with such labels as good woman, bad woman, villainess, heroine, someone-who’s-been-treated-unfairly, someone-treated-too-well. “You can be all of that in one person,” said Marina. “One can be a villain, and next time a hero.

“If we go through Lee’s character, I myself would like to find out: Who is he? Was he really that mean of a person?—which I think he was—but it’s a hard road for me to take because I do not want to understand him. I have to tell you in advance that, as far as Lee is concerned—I don’t like him. I’m mad at him. Very mad at him, yes. When a person dies, people have such anger. They loved their husband or wife for a long time so they say, ‘How dare you die on me?’ Okay, but that’s not my reason. For me, it’s, ‘How dare you abandon me?’ In circumstances like that? I mean, *you die* but I’m still here licking my wounds.’

“All the same, I’m definitely sure he didn’t do it, even if I’m still mad at him. Because he shouldn’t involve a wife and family if he was playing those kinds of games. Yes, I do believe he was on a mission, maybe even when he went to Russia, but first I have to figure out what he was doing here. It wasn’t just happening here all of a sudden in America. It was a continuation. In my mind, I’m not trying to convince you or the American public—I have to resolve it for myself. But I think he was sent over to Russia, maybe. I think so. I have no proof. I have nothing. I do think he was more human than has been portrayed. I’m not trying to make an angel out of him, but I was interested in him because he was different, he would broaden my horizon, and all the other men I wanted had been taken or didn’t want me.”

Every time she watches a film and sees an actor playing Lee, the actor is nothing like him. He turns his head like Lee or waves his hair the same way, but, she says, your American public knows Lee only from a few photographs, and that is what this actor is copying. She sees another Lee, and she does not know the psyche of that fellow. She still has it to discover.

Her interviewers asked how she would have felt if a truck had hit Alik in Minsk—if she had been his widow then, would she have thought of him fondly? She said yes. She would have thought it was just a stormy beginning but they were breaking ground that they would later stand on in their marriage. After all, she took a chance. She had crossed the ocean for him. Of course, she was afraid of him already, even if little by little she had been learning that she did not know, never knew, where she stood. Not with him. But at least you could hope.

She will never forget that on their last night in Irving, he had kept making advances to her until he went to bed, and she had refused. She had said to herself, "No, if I don't teach him this lesson right now, this lying will continue. O. H. Lee will continue. Don't butter up to me." She tried to discipline him.

Afterward, she had to think, What if he really wanted to be close to me? What if I put him in a bad mood? It torments her. What if they had made love that last night? But she is the wrong person to talk to about this, she would say, because she is not a sexual person. Sensuous but not sensual. She didn't like sex, she would say. She was not expert, nor could she tell you how grandiose something had been, because she had never experienced that. No Beethoven or Tchaikovsky for her, not in bed, no grand finale.

MARINA: In Texas, sun is very intense for me and very harsh, very bright. I love moon. It's cool and it's shiny and that's my melancholy period. And some people are shining and they are bright and they burn. You know what I mean? I'm not sun. I'm a moon . . .

I look at America, it's all wonderful. But you go to the damn grocery store and it's 200 varieties of cereal. And basically it's only oats, corn, how many things . . . Just so somebody going to make extra million off that. It's so unnecessary. If that's progress, if that's abundance, how stupid for us to want it. 300 bags of poison, maybe only two or three good [well,] that kind of progress I don't

think we should strive for . . . Do I make any sense to you? Or I'm just complaining?

INTERVIEWER: No, I agree with you.

After the assassination, there were times when she was close to ending her life. She wondered when her breaking point would come. She had crossed that ocean for nothing. Still, she tried to survive. It was a lonely life. Every day. The worst of the pain was that maybe she loved him more by the end than in their beginning. Maybe grieving was just starting to happen now! Maybe! Because she had never really had such a process. Just numb, with pain always there.

She doesn't know whether they would have stayed married, but still, Lee was the person she would have liked to have been able to make it with. Through life. There was some goodness in him to hold on to, and on that last unexpected Thursday when he came to visit, he was kind of sheepish because of that big lie, O. H. Lee.

And when he came in, he said, "Hi," nice and everything, and she said, "What are you doing here?"—cold and rude.

Later, she couldn't understand. Maybe he didn't love her, maybe he cared less for her, but he loved his little girls enormously, and even thirty years later she heard a story about how in those last days, when he lived on North Beckley, he was playing with the grandchildren of the woman who ran his last rooming house. These children called him Mr. Lee. He asked one of those boys, "Are you a good boy?" and that kid shook his head in the negative, said, "Uh-unh," and Lee said, "Never be so bad that you hurt somebody." This kid was now grown-up, but he still remembered that, still told that story.

The morning when Lee left, Friday morning, November 22, 1963, she did not get up with him when he arose very early. She tried to, but he said, "Don't worry. Go back to sleep." And he left quietly.

She had gone to bed after him the night before. He was already asleep or pretended to be. Then, when she woke up in the middle of the night to check on baby Rachel, she took a look at him. The only illumination was by nightlight, very low. But Lee scared her. She touched him with her foot and he kicked it away. Then he lay so still that it was like he had died. He didn't move for the next hour. She said to herself, "Is he alive?" He looked so still. Abso-

lutely gone. She couldn't hear his breath. She had to bend over very close to feel his breathing—she thought he had died on her. Isn't that funny? For all these years she remembered saying, "Thank goodness he's alive." And he made no sound all night and never moved again.

In the morning, he made himself instant coffee, drank it in a plastic cup, and went off to work.

She sits in a chair, a tiny woman in her early fifties, her thin shoulders hunched forward in such pain of spirit under such a mass of guilt that one would comfort her as one would hug a child. What is left of what was once her beauty are her extraordinary eyes, blue as diamonds, and they blaze with light as if, in divine compensation for the dead weight of all that will not cease to haunt her, she has been granted a spark from the hour of an apocalypse others have not seen. Perhaps it is the light offered to victims who have suffered like the gods.

6

The Third Widow

MARGUERITE OSWALD. I don't believe this letter belongs with the letters. May I see it, please? Is that a letter from Russia? I don't think so from what I can see from here.

MR. RANKIN. It purports to be, Mrs. Oswald. I hand it to you. Is it Exhibit 198 you are speaking of?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. Yes. I'm sorry. There was another very important letter of this size that I thought maybe had become confused with the Russian letters. You will have to forgive me, Chief Justice Warren, but this is quite a big undertaking.¹

All day long, throughout her testimony, she has been fumbling through her file of letters, bringing forth "documents, gentlemen," that prove nothing but that she has had her share of lonely nights filled with intolerable scenarios of suspicion. Her letters prove of little use in the lawyerly air of the Warren Commission Hearings. She is wasting their time with trivia, and all the while her possession of these letters remains as important to her as tombstones. Who is moving the tombstones in the family graveyard?

The interlocutors grow testy:

REPRESENTATIVE BOGGS. Why did your son defect to Russia?

MARGUERITE OSWALD. I cannot answer that yes or no sir. I am going to go through the whole story or it is no good. And that is what I have been doing for this Commission all day long—giving a story.

REPRESENTATIVE BOGGS. Suppose you just make it very brief.

MARGUERITE OSWALD. I cannot make it brief. I will say I am unable to make it brief. This is my life and my son's life going down in history.²

Marguerite has taken sufficient blame, scorn, and ridicule from other people (including the barely concealed animus of the Warren Commission) that there is no need to depict her in one more unfavorable light—it seems certain at the least that every malformation, or just about, of Lee Harvey Oswald's character had its roots in her. That much granted, it is also difficult not to feel some guarded sympathy for Marguerite Claverie Oswald. As with Lee, the internal workings of her psyche were always condemned to hard labor, and so much of what she tried, and with the best intentions, would fail—especially her obvious desire to receive some love from her sons, enough love at least to match her harsh pride. It is not agreeable to see Marguerite's life through her eyes. The boys are always leaving her as quickly as they can, and their willful wives—willful as she sees them—have no belief in her desire to be a decent mother-in-law. Her sacrifices are many and real—but no love comes back. Merely banishment from her children, and icy silence. And then her favorite is accused of killing the President.

In her heart of hearts she has to wonder whether indeed he did it—she knows how far he can go.

Denigrators of Marguerite Oswald will remark on how much she loved the limelight after he was gone, and it is true: His love of attention was equaled by hers—she spoke to large audiences for the first time in her life, and it was a great step forward from that sales job in New York where she was fired because of intractable body odor.

Yet, for all her latter-day notoriety, we have to recall that she died alone and full of a literal cancer to follow upon the bottomless cancer of those endless wounds within personal wounds—no, she had her life, and one would not want it, but somewhere in the bureaucratic corridors of Karmic Reassignment she is probably arguing now with one of the monitors, dissatisfied with the low station, by her lights, of her next placement. "I gave birth to one of the most famous and important Americans who ever lived!" she will tell the clerk-angel who is recording her story.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any family here at all?

MARGUERITE: I have no family, period. I brought three children into the world, and I have sisters, I have nieces, I have nephews, I have grandchildren, and I'm all alone. That answers that question and I don't want to hear another word about it.³

There she stands with her outrageous ego and her self-deceit, her bold loneliness and cold bones, those endless humiliations that burn like sores.

Yet, she is worthy of Dickens. Marguerite Oswald can stand for literary office with Micawber and Uriah Heep. No word she utters will be false to her character; her stamp will be on every phrase. Few people without a literary motive would seek her company for long, but a novelist can esteem Marguerite. She does all his work for him.

Given such modest thoughts, it is time to conclude one's sad tale of a young American who lived abroad and returned to a grave in Texas. Let us, then, say farewell to Lee Harvey Oswald's long and determined dream of political triumph, wifely approbation,

and high destiny. Who among us can say that he is in no way related to our own dream? If it had not been for Theodore Dreiser and his last great work, one would like to have used "An American Tragedy" as the title for this journey through Oswald's beleaguered life.

The Republican Convention

1964

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The Republican Convention

1964

~~Would you care to hear a story Robert Welch likes to tell?~~

"The minister has preached a superb sermon. It has moved his congregation to lead nobler and more righteous lives. Then the minister says, 'That, of course, was the Lord's side. For the next half hour, to be fair, I'll give equal time to the Devil.'"

Well, ladies and gentlemen, upon me has fallen the unhappy task of following Mr. Buckley. Mr. Buckley was so convincing in his speech that if I had not been forewarned that the Devil cannot know how far he has fallen from Paradise, I would most certainly have decided Mr. Buckley was an angel. A dishonest angel, perhaps, but then which noble speaker is not?

I did not come here, however, to give Mr. Buckley compliments. I appear, presumably, to discuss the real meaning of the Right Wing in America, a phenomenon which is not necessarily real in its meaning, for the Right Wing covers a spectrum of opinion as wide as the peculiarities one encounters on the Left. If we of the Left are a family of anarchists and Communists, socialists, pacifists, nihilists, beatniks, international spies, terrorists, hipsters and Bowery bums, secret agents, dope addicts, sex maniacs and scholarly professors, what indeed is one to make of the Right, which includes the president of a corporation or the Anglican headmaster of a preparatory school, intellectually attired in the fine ideas of Edmund Burke, down the road to the Eisenhower-is-a-Communist set of arguments, all the way down the road to an American Nazi like George Lincoln Rockwell, or to the sort of conservatives who attack property with bombs in California. On a vastly more modest and civilized scale, Mr. Buckley may commit a mild mayhem on the American sense of reality when he says, McCarthy inaugurated no reign of terror. Perhaps, I say, it was someone else. Doe

But it is easy to mock the Right Wing. I would rather put the best face one can on it. I think there are any number of interesting adolescents and young men and women going to school now who find themselves drawn to the Right. Secretly drawn. Some are drawn to conservatism today much as they might have been attracted to the Left 30 years ago. They are the ones who are curious for freedom, the freedom

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~~THE HOUSE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION~~



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Left Conservatism

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The Debate with William Buckley—The Real Meaning of the Right Wing in America

It could be argued that the impetus to America's cold war with communism has come from a collective psychosis, from a monster which has borne almost no relation to the objective cold war going on in these years, a particular real cold war which has been concrete, limited, ugly, detailed, and shrewd in its encounters. The Russians have shown a tough tenacious sly somewhat dishonorable and never-tiring regard for local victory in each of their episodes with us. We have dealt with this international opposition in terms which were schizophrenic. On the working diplomatic level any adjectives applied to the Russians could have applied to us. We also have been tough tenacious sly somewhat dishonorable and have hardly ever slackened in our regard for local victory; but at the level of domestic political consumption we have presented the Russians to the American public as implacable, insane, and corrupting. We could have been talking equally of the plague or some exotic variety of sex. Obviously we were afraid of something more than the Communists. Dread has been loose in the twentieth century, and America has shivered in its horror since the Depression and the Second War.

The speech written for the debate with Buckley is an attempt to explore into this dread. ~~It is also an attempt to explode Senator Goldwater's intellectual pretensions which are sheer mountebank.~~ It was written in 1961

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but can serve now perhaps as
a preface to the ~~Continental~~ Republican
Convention of 1964.

not only to make money but the freedom to discover their own nature, to discover good and to discover—dare I say it?—evil. At bottom they are ready to go to war with a ready-made world which they feel is stifling them.

I hope it is evident that I do not see the people in the Right Wing as a simple group of fanatics, but rather as a contradictory stew of reactionaries and individualists, of fascists and libertarians, libertarians like John Dos Passos for example. It could be said that most Right Wingers don't really know what they want. I would not include Mr. Buckley in this category, but I think it can be said the politics of the Right in America reflects an emotion more than an insight.

~~I think of~~ ^{will relate} a story told me by a Southerner about his aunt. She lived in a small town in South Carolina. She was a spinster. She came from one of the better families in town. Not surprisingly, the house where she lived had been in the family for a long time. She loved the trees on the walk ~~which~~ bordered each side of the street which ran by her house. They were very old trees.

The City Council passed a bill to cut down those trees. The street had to be widened. A bypass from the highway was being constructed around the old bypass of the business district. The reason for the new bypass was to create a new business district: a supermarket, a superpharmacy, a superservice station, a chromium-plated diner, a new cemetery with plastic tombstones, a new armory for the Army Reserve, an auto supply store, a farm implements shop, a store for Venetian blinds, a laundromat and an information booth for tourists who would miss the town on the new bypass but could read about it in the Chamber of Commerce's literature as they drove on to Florida.

Well, the old lady fought the bypass. To her, it was sacrilege that these trees be cut down. She felt that if there were any value to some older notions of grace and courtesy, courage under duress, and gallantry to ladies, of faith in God and the structure of His ways, that if there were any value at all to chivalry, tradition and manners, the children of the new generations could come to find it more naturally by walking down an avenue of old homes and trees than by reading the *National Review* in front of the picture window under the metal awning of the brand-new town library.

Secretly the old lady had some radical notions. She seemed to think that the old street and the trees on this

old street were the property of everyone in the town, because everyone in the town could have the pleasure of walking down that street. At her gloomiest she even used to think that a new generation of Negroes growing up in the town, strong, hostile, too smart, and just loaded with Northern ideas, would hate the South forever and never forgive the past once the past was destroyed. If they grew up on the edge of brand-new bypasses in cement-brick homes with asbestos roofs and squatty hothouse bushes in the artificial fertilizer of the front yard, why then, how could they ever come to understand that not everyone in the old South was altogether evil and that there had been many whites who learned much from the Negro and loved him, that it was Negro slaves who had first planted these trees, and that it was Negro love of all that grew well which had set the trunks of these trees growing in so straight a route right into the air.

So the old lady fought the execution of these old trees. She went to see the Mayor, she talked to everyone on the City Council, she circulated a petition among her neighbors, she proceeded to be so active in the defense of these trees that many people in town began to think she was just naturally showing her age. Finally, her nephew took her aside. It was impossible to stop the bypass, he explained to her, because there was a man in town who had his heart set on it, and no one in town was powerful enough to stop this man. Not on a matter so special as these trees.

Who was this powerful and villainous man? Who would destroy the beauty of a fine old street? she wanted to know. Was it a Communist? No. Was it the leader for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People? No. Was it perhaps a Freedom Rider? No. Was it a beatnik or a drug addict? No. Wasn't it one of those New York agitators? No, no, it wasn't even a Cuban. The sad fact of the matter was that the powerful and villainous man was married to the richest woman in the county, came himself from an excellently good family, owned half the real estate around, and was president of the biggest local corporation, which was a large company for making plastic luncheon plates. He was a man who had been received often in the old lady's house. He had even talked to her about joining his organization. He was the leader of the local council of the John Birch Society.

Mr. Buckley may say I am being unfair. The man who

puts the new bypass through does not have to be the local leader of the John Birch Society. He can also be a liberal Republican, or a Democratic mayor, a white liberal Southerner, or—and here Mr. Buckley might tell my story with pleasure—he could be a Federal man. The bypass might be part of a national superhighway. The villain might even be a Federal man who is under scrutiny by the Senate Investigating Committee, the House Un-American Affairs Committee, the FBI, and the CIA. It seems not to matter—a man can be a fellow-traveler or a reactionary—either way those trees get chopped down, and the past is unreasonably destroyed.

The moral well may be that certain distinctions have begun to disappear. The average experience today is to meet few people who are authentic. Our minds belong to one cause, our hands manipulate a machine which works against our cause. We are not our own masters. We work against ourselves. We suffer from a disease. It is a disease which afflicts almost all of us by now, so prevalent, insidious and indefinable that I choose to call it a plague.

I think somewhere, at some debatable point in history, it is possible man caught some unspeakable illness of the psyche, that he betrayed some secret of his being and so betrayed the future of his species. I could not begin to trace the beginning of this plague, but whether it began early or late, I think it is accelerating now at the most incredible speed, and I would go so far as to think that many of the men and women who belong to the Right Wing are more sensitive to this disease than virtually any other people in this country. I think it is precisely this sensitivity which gives power to the Right Wing's passions.

Now this plague appears to us as a sickening of our substance, an electrification of our nerves, a deterioration of desire, an apathy about the future, a detestation of the present, an amnesia of the past. Its forms are many, its flavor is unforgettable: It is the disease which destroys flavor. Its symptoms appear everywhere: in architecture, medicine, in the deteriorated quality of labor, the insubstantiality of money, the ravishment of nature, the impoverishment of food, the manipulation of emotion, the emptiness of faith, the displacement of sex, the deterioration of language, the reduction of philosophy, and the alienation of man from the product of his work and the results of his acts.

What a modest list! What a happy century. One could speak for hours on each of the categories of this plague. But we are here tonight to talk about other matters. So I will try to do no more than list the symptoms of this plague.

Even 25 years ago architecture, for example, still told one something about a building and what went on within it. Today, who can tell the difference between a modern school and a modern hospital, between a modern hospital and a modern prison, or a prison and a housing project? The airports look like luxury hotels, the luxury hotels are indistinguishable from a modern corporation's home office, and the home office looks like an air-conditioned underground city on the moon.

In medicine, not so long ago, just before the war, there still used to be diseases. Diphtheria, smallpox, German measles, scarlet fever. Today there are allergies, viruses, neuroses, incurable diseases. Surgery may have made some mechanical advances, but sickness is more mysterious than ever. No one knows quite what a virus is, nor an allergy, nor how to begin to comprehend an incurable disease. We have had an avalanche of antibiotics, and now we have a rampage of small epidemics with no name and no distinctive set of symptoms.

Nature is wounded in her fisheries, her forests. Airplanes spray insecticides. Species of insects are removed from the chain of life. Crops are poisoned just slightly. We grow enormous tomatoes which have no taste. Food is raised in artificial circumstances, with artificial nutrients, full of alien chemicals and foreign bodies.

Our emotions are turned like television dials by men in motivational research. Goods are not advertised to speak to our needs but to our secret itch. Our secondary schools have a curriculum as interesting as the wax paper on breakfast food. Our educational system teaches us not to think, but to know the answer. Faith is half-empty. Until the churches can offer an explanation for Buchenwald, or Siberia or Hiroshima, they are only giving solace to the unimaginative. They are neglecting the modern crisis. For all of us live today as divided men. Our hope for the future must be shared with the terror that we may go exploding into the heavens at the same instant 10,000,000 other souls are being exploded beside us. Not surprising, then, if many

people no longer look to sex as an act whose final purpose is to continue the race.

Language is drowning in jargons of mud. Philosophy is in danger of becoming obsolescent. Metaphysics disappears, logical positivism arises. The mass of men begin to have respect not for those simple ideas which are mysteries, but on the contrary for those simple ideas which are certitudes. Soon a discussion of death will be considered a betrayal of philosophy.

Finally, there is a vast alienation of man from responsibility. One hundred years ago Marx was writing about the alienation of man from his tools and the product of his work. Today that alienation has gone deeper. Today we are alienated from our acts. A writer I know interviewed Dr. Teller, "the father of the hydrogen bomb." There was going to be a new test of that bomb soon. "Are you going to see it?" asked the reporter.

"Who is interested in that?" asked Teller. "That is just a big bang."

Face to face with a danger they cannot name, there are still many people on the Right Wing who sense that there seems to be some almost palpable conspiracy to tear life away from its roots. There is a biological rage at the heart of much Right Wing polemic. They feel as if somebody, or some group—in New York no doubt—are trying to poison the very earth, air and water of their existence. In their mind, this plague is associated with collectivism, and I am not so certain they are wrong. The essence of biology seems to be challenge and response, risk and survival, war and the lessons of war. It may be biologically true that life cannot have beauty without its companion—danger. Collectivism promises security. It spreads security the way a knife spreads margarine. Collectivism may well choke the pores of life.

But there is a contradiction here. Not all of the Right Wing, after all, is individual and strong. Far from it. The Right Wing knows better than I would know how many of them are collectivists in their own hearts, how many detest questions and want answers, loathe paradox, and live with a void inside themselves, a void of fear, a void of fear for the future and for what is unexpected, which fastens upon Communists as equal, one to one, with the Devil. The Right Wing often speaks of freedom when what it desires is iron law, when what it really desires is collectivism

managed by itself. If the Right Wing is reacting to the plague, all too many of the powerful people on the Right—the presidents of more than a few corporations in California, for example—are helping to disseminate the plague. I do not know if this applies to Senator Goldwater who may be an honorable and upright man, but I think it can do no harm to take a little time to study the application of his ideas.

As a thoroughgoing conservative, the Senator believes in increasing personal liberty by enlarging economic liberty. He is well known for his views. He would reduce the cost of public welfare and diminish the present power of the unions, he would lower the income tax, dispense with subsidies to the farmer, decentralize the Federal Government and give states' rights back to the states, he would limit the Government's spending, and he would discourage any interference by Washington in the education of the young. It is a complete, comprehensive program. One may agree with it or disagree. But no doubt it is a working program. The reasonableness of this program is attractive. It might even reduce the depredations of the plague. There is just one trouble with it. It does not stop here. Senator Goldwater takes one further step. He would carry the cold war to the Soviet Union, he would withdraw diplomatic recognition, he would recognize, I quote, that:

... If our objective is victory over communism, we must achieve superiority in all of the weapons—military, as well as political and economic—that may be useful in reaching that goal. Such a program costs money, but so long as the money is spent wisely and efficiently, I would spend it. I am not in favor of economizing on the nation's safety.

It is the sort of statement which inspires a novelist's imagination long enough to wonder what might happen to the Senator's program if he were elected President. For we may be certain he is sincere in his desire to achieve superiority in all the weapons, including such ideological weapons as arriving first on the moon. But what of the cost? There is one simple and unforgettable figure. More than 60 cents out of every dollar spent by the Government is spent on military security already. Near to two thirds of every dollar. And our national budget in 1963 will be in the neighborhood of \$90,000,000,000. If we add what

will be spent on foreign aid, the figure will come to more than 75 cents in every dollar.

Yet these expenditures have not given us a clear superiority to the Soviet Union. On the contrary, Senator Goldwater points out that we must still *achieve* superiority. Presumably, he would increase the amount of money spent on defense. This, I suppose, would not hinder him from reducing the income tax, nor would it force him to borrow further funds. He could regain any moneys lost in this reduction by taking the money from welfare and education, that is he could if he didn't increase our defense efforts by more than 10 percent, for if he did that, we would be spending more already than the money we now spend on welfare. And of course that part of the population which would be most affected by the cessation of welfare, that is, so to speak, the impoverished part of the population, might not be happy. And it is not considered wise to have a portion of the populace unhappy when one is expanding one's ability to go to war, unless one wishes to put them in uniform. Perhaps Goldwater might not reduce the expenditures on welfare during this period. He might conceivably increase them a little in order to show that over the short period, during the crisis, during the arms buildup while we achieve superiority over the Russians, a conservative can take just as good care of the masses as a liberal. Especially since we may assume the Russians would be trying to achieve superiority over us at the same time we are trying to achieve superiority over them, so that an arms and munitions competition would be taking place and there would be enough money spent for everyone.

But let me move on to education where the problem is more simple. To achieve superiority over the Russians there, we simply need more technicians, engineers and scientists. We also have to build the laboratories in which to teach them. Perhaps, most reluctantly, just for the duration of the crisis, which is to say for the duration of his period in office, President Goldwater might have to increase the Federal budget for education. That would be contrary to his principles. But perhaps he could recover some of those expenditures by asking the farmer to dispense with subsidies. The farmer would not mind if additional Government funds were allocated to education and welfare, and he was not included. The farmer would not mind if the larger corporations of America, General Dynamics and General Motors, General

Electric, United States Steel and A.T.&T. were engaged in rather large new defense contracts. No, the farmer would not mind relinquishing his subsidy. Not at all. Still, to keep him as happy as everyone else Goldwater might increase his subsidy. Just for the duration of the crisis. Just for the duration of enlightened conservatism in office. It would not matter about the higher income tax, the increased farm subsidies, the enlarged appropriation for welfare, the new magnified role of the Federal Government in education, President Goldwater could still give the states back their rights. He would not have to integrate the schools down South. He could drive the Russians out of the Congo, while the White Councils were closing the white colleges in order not to let a black man in. Yes, he could. For the length of a 20-minute speech in Phoenix, Arizona, he could. But you know and I know and he knows what he would do—he would do what President Eisenhower did. He would send troops in to integrate the schools of the South. He would do that if he wanted to keep the Russians out of the Congo.

Poor President Goldwater. At least he could cut down on the power of the unions. He could pass a Right-to-Work act. Indeed he could. He could carry the war to the Russians, he could achieve superiority, while the unions of America were giving up their power and agreeing not to strike. Yes. Yes. Of course he could. Poor President Goldwater. He might have to end by passing a law which would make it illegal ever to pass a Right-to-Work law. Under Goldwater, the American people would never have to be afraid of creeping socialism. They would just have state conservatism, creeping state conservatism. Yes, there are conservatives like the old lady who wished to save the trees and there are conservatives who talk of saving trees in order to get the power to cut down the trees.

So long as there is a cold war, there cannot be a conservative administration in America. There cannot for the simplest reason. Conservatism depends upon a huge reduction in the power and the budget of the central Government. Indeed, so long as there is a cold war, there are no politics of consequence in America. It matters less each year which party holds the power. Before the enormity of defense expenditures, there is no alternative to an ever-increasing welfare state. It can be an interesting welfare state like the present one, or a dull welfare state like President Eisenhower's. It can even be a totally repressive welfare state

like President Goldwater's well might be. But the conservatives might recognize that greater economic liberty is not possible so long as one is building a greater war machine. To pretend that both can be real is hypocritical beyond belief. The conservatives are then merely mouthing impractical ideas which they presume may bring them power. They are sufficiently experienced to know that only liberalism can lead America into total war without popular violence, or an active underground.

There is an alternative. Perhaps it is ill-founded. Perhaps it is impractical. I do not know enough to say. I fear there is no one in this country who knows enough to say. Yet I think the time may be approaching for a great debate on this alternative. I say that at least this alternative is no more evil and no more visionary than Barry Goldwater's promise of a conservative America with superiority in all the weapons. So I say—in modesty and in doubt, I say—the alternative may be to end the cold war. The cold war has been an instrument of megalomaniacal delusion to this country. It is the poison of the Right Wing. It is the poison they feed themselves and it is the poison they feed the nation. Communism may be evil incarnate, but it is a most complex evil which seems less intolerable today than it did under Stalin. I for one do not understand an absolute evil which is able to ameliorate its own evil. I say an evil which has captured the elements of the good is complex. To insist communism is a simple phenomenon can only brutalize the minds of the American people. Already, it has given this country over to the power of every huge corporation and organization in America. It has helped to create an America run by committees. It has stricken us with secret waste and hatred. It has held back the emergence of an America more alive and more fantastic than any America yet created.

So I say: End the cold war. Pull back our boundaries to what we can defend and to what wishes to be defended. There is one dread advantage to atomic war. It enables one powerful nation to be the equal of many nations. We do not have to hold every loose piece of real estate on earth to have security. Let communism come to those countries it will come to. Let us not use up our substance trying to hold onto nations which are poor, underdeveloped, and bound to us only by the depths of their hatred for us. We cannot equal the effort the Communists make in such places. We are not dedicated in that direction. We were not born

to do that. We have had our frontier already. We cannot be excited to our core, our historic core, by the efforts of new underdeveloped nations to expand their frontiers. No, we are better engaged in another place, we are engaged in making the destiny of Western man, a destiny which seeks now to explore out beyond the moon and in back into the depths of the soul. With some small fraction of the money we spend now on defense we can truly defend ourselves and Western Europe, we can develop, we can become extraordinary, we can go a little further toward completing the heroic vision of Western man. Let the Communists flounder in the countries they acquire. The more countries they hold, the less supportable will become the contradictions of their ideology, the more bitter will grow the divisions in their internal interest, and the more enormous their desire to avoid a war which could only destroy the economies they will have developed at such vast labor and such vast waste. Let it be their waste, not ours. Our mission may be not to raise the level of minimum subsistence in the world so much as it may be to show the first features and promise of that incalculable renaissance men may someday enter. So let the true war begin. It is not a war between West and East, between capitalism and communism, or democracy and totalitarianism; it is rather the deep war which has gone on for six centuries in the nature of Western man, it is the war between the conservative and the rebel, between authority and instinct, between the two views of God which collide in the mind of the West, the ceremonious conservative view which believes that if God allows one man to be born wealthy and another poor, we must not tamper unduly with this conception of place, this form of society created by God, for it is possible the poor man is more fortunate than the rich, since he may be judged less severely on his return to eternity. That is the conservative view and it is not a mean nor easy view to deny.

The rebel or the revolutionary might argue, however, that the form of society is not God's creation, but a result of the war between God and the Devil, that this form is no more than the line of the battlefield upon which the Devil distributes wealth against God's best intention. So man must serve as God's agent, seeking to shift the wealth of our universe in such a way that the talent, creativity and strength of the future, dying now by dim dull deaths in every poor man alive, will come to take its first breath, will show us

what a mighty renaissance is locked in the unconscious of the dumb. It is the argument which claims that no conservative can ever be certain those imbued with the value of tradition did not give more devotion to their garden, their stable, their kennel, the livery of their servant and the oratorical style of their clergyman than God intended. Which conservative indeed can be certain that if his class once embodied some desire of the Divine Will, that it has not also now incurred God's displeasure after all these centuries of organized Christianity and enormous Christian greed? Which conservative can swear that it was not his class who gave the world a demonstration of greed so complete, an expropriation and spoliation of backward lands and simple people so avid, so vicious, so insane, a class which finally gave such suck to the Devil, that the most backward primitive in the darkest jungle would sell the grave and soul of his dearest ancestor for a machine with which to fight back?

That is the war which has meaning, that great and mortal debate between rebel and conservative where each would argue the other is an agent of the Devil. That is the war we can welcome, the war we can expect if the cold war will end. It is the war which will take life and power from the statistical congelations of the Center and give it over to Left and to Right, it is the war which will teach us our meaning, where we will discover ourselves and whether we are good and where we are not, so it is the war which will give the West what is great within it, the war which gives birth to art and furnishes strength to fight the plague. Art, free inquiry and the liberty to speak may be the only cure against the plague.

But first, I say, first there is another debate America must have. Do we become totalitarian or do we end the cold war? Do we accept the progressive collectivization of our lives which eternal cold war must bring, or do we gamble on the chance that we have armament enough already to be secure and to be free, and do we seek therefore to discover ourselves, and Nature willing, discover the conservative or rebellious temper of these tortured times? And when we are done, will we know truly who has spoken within us, the Lord, or the Fallen Prince?

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 IN THE RED LIGHT: A History of the Republican
~~Convention in 1964~~
 Convention in 1964

POLITICS

He had drawn the burning city, a great bonfire of architectural styles, ranging from Egyptian to Cape Cod colonial. Through the center, winding from left to right, was a long hill street and down it, spilling into the middle foreground, came the mob carrying baseball bats and torches. For the faces of its members, he was using the innumerable sketches he had made of the people who come to California to die; the cultists of all sorts, economic as well as religious, the wave, airplane, funeral and preview watchers—all those poor devils who can only be stirred by the promise of miracles and violence. For "Dr. Know-All Pierce-All" had made the necessary promise of miracles and they were marching under a banner in a great united front of screwballs and screwboxes to purify the land. No longer bored, they sang and danced in the red light of the flame.

—NATHANAEL WEST, *The Day of the Locust*

Now, the city was beautiful, it was still the most beautiful city in the United States, but like all American cities it was a casualty of the undeclared war. There had been an undisclosed full-scale struggle going on in America for twenty years—it was whether the country would go mad or not. And the battle line of that war (which showed that yes slowly the country was losing the war, we were indeed going mad) was of course the progress of the new roads, buildings, and supermarkets which popped out all over the cities of the nation. San Francisco was losing her beauty. Monstrous corporations in combine with monstrous realtors had erected monstrous boxes of Kleenex ten, twenty, thirty stories high through the downtown section, and the new view from Telegraph Hill had shards of glass the size of a mountain wall stuck into the soft Italian landscape of St. Francis' City. The San Francisco Hilton, for an example, while close to twenty stories high was near to a square block in size and looked from the street to have the proportions and form of a cube of sugar. It was a dirty sugar-white in color and its windows were set in an odd elongated checkerboard, a harlequin pattern in which each window was offset from the one above and beneath like the vents in a portable radio.

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The Hilton was only six weeks old, but already it was one of the architectural wonders of the world, for its insides were composed in large part of an automobile ramp on which it was possible to drive all the way up to the eleventh floor, open a door and lo! you were in your hotel corridor, twenty feet from your own room door. It was a startling way to exhaust the internal space of a hotel, but it had one huge American advantage: any guest at the Hilton could drive all the way to his room without ever having to steer a lady through the lobby. Of course, after all those automobile ramps, there was not much volume left, so the rooms were small, the rooms were very small ~~for a downtown hotel~~, and the windows were placed to the extreme left or right of the wall and ran from ceiling to floor, in order to allow the building to appear to the outside eye like a radio being carried by a model who worked in the high nude. The carpets and wallpapers, the drapes and the table tops were plastic, the bathroom had the odor of burning insecticide. It developed that the plastic cement used to finish the tiling gave off this odor during the months it took to dry. Molecules were being tortured everywhere.

Well, that was American capitalism gainfully employed. It had won the war. It had won it in so many places you could picture your accommodations before you arrived. Such is the nature of the promiscuous. Flying out, way out on the jet, on the way West, not yet at the Hilton but knowing it would be there, I got into a conversation with the man who sat at the window, an Australian journalist named Moffitt, a short fellow with a bushwhacker's moustache; and he scolded me for reading Buchanan's book, *Who Killed Kennedy?* He wanted to know why a man of my intelligence bothered with trash. Well, the country had never been the same since Kennedy was assassinated, courtesy was ready to reply; some process of derailment, begun with Hemingway's death and the death of Marilyn Monroe, had been racing on now through the months, through the heavens, faster than the contrails of our jet across the late afternoon mind of America; so one looked for clues where they could be found. It would be easier to know that Oswald had done it all by himself, or as an accomplice to ten other men, or was innocent, or twice damned; anything was superior to that sense of the ship of state battering its way down swells of sea, while in the hold cargo was loose and ready to slide.

This conversation did not of course take place—an Astrojet is not the vehicle for metaphorical transactions, it is after all still another of the extermination chambers of the century—slowly the breath gives up some microcosmic portion of itself, green plastic and silver-gray plastic, the nostrils breathe no odor of materials which existed once as elements of nature, no wood, no stone, no ore, time molds like a sponge in the sink.

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But Moffitt was Australian and fascinated with America, and had his quick comments to make, some provincial, some pure shrewd; finally he poked his finger on something I had never put together for myself, not quite: "Why is it," he asked, "that all the new stuff you build here, including the interior furnishings of this airplane, looks like a child's nursery?"

And that is what it was. The inside of our airplane was like a child's plastic nursery, a dayroom in the children's ward, and if I had been Quentin Compson, I might have answered, "Because we want to go back, because the nerves grew in all the wrong ways. Because we developed habits which are suffocating us to death. I tell you, man, we do it because we're sick, we're a sick nation, we're sick to the edge of vomit and so we build our lives with materials which smell like vomit, polyethylene and bakelite and fiberglass and styrene. Yes, our schools look like nurseries, and our factories and our temples, our kitchens and our johns, our airports and our libraries and our offices, we are one great big bloody nursery attached to a doctor's waiting room, and we are sick, we're very sick, maybe we always were sick, maybe the Puritans carried the virus and were so odious the British were right to drive them out, maybe we're a nation of culls and weeds and half-crazy from the start."

Nobody of course was Quentin Compson, nobody spoke that way any more, but the question was posed by a ghost and so had to linger: was there indeed a death in the seed which brought us here? was the country extraordinary or accursed, a junkyard where even the minnows gave caviar in the filthy pond in the fierce electric American night?

I

I must see the things; I must see the men.

—BURKE, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

At the Mark Hopkins on Saturday morning two days before the convention would begin, the atmosphere had the same agreeable clean rather healthy excitement (that particular American excitement) one picks up on the morning of a big football game. The kids were out, the children who were for Goldwater and those who were for Scranton, and they milled about in the small open courtyard of the hotel, and in the small hopelessly congested lobby where lines one hundred long were waiting for each of the three overworked elevators beating up to the twelfth and fourteenth floors, Scranton and Goldwater Headquarters respectively. It was a clear day outside, one of those cool sunny days in July when San Francisco is as nice as New York on a beautiful day in October, and the city fell away from Nob Hill in a perfect throw. There were apples in the air. It was a perfect football day. There was even wistfulness to be

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eighteen and have a date for lunch before the game. So the teams lined up first this way in one's mind, the children, adolescents, and young men and women for Goldwater to one side, the Scrantons to the other, and you could tell a lot about the colleges and the teams by looking at the faces. The Goldwater girls and boys were for the most part innocent, and they tended to have large slightly protruded jaws, not unlike Big Barry himself, and blue eyes—an astonishing number had blue eyes (was the world finally coming to the war of the blue-eyed versus the brown-eyed?)—and they were simple, they were small-town, they were hicky, the boys tended to have a little acne, an introspective pimple or two by the corner of the mouth or the side of the chin, a lot of the boys looked solemn and serious, dedicated but slightly blank—they could fix a transistor radio, but a word like “Renaissance” would lay a soft wound of silence, stupefaction in their brain. They were idealists, nearly every last one of them, but they did not speak of the happier varieties of idealism; one thought of Lutherans from North Dakota, 4-H from Minnesota, and Eagle Scouts from Maine. Many of them wore eyeglasses. They were thrifty young men, hardworking young men, polite, slightly paralyzed before the variety of life, but ready to die for a cause. It was obvious they thought Goldwater was one of the finest men ever to be born into American life. And they were stingy, they wore store-bought ready-mades, skinny kids in twenty-dollar suits and that pinch of the jaw, that recidivism of the gums which speaks of false teeth before you are fifty.

The Goldwater girls ran to two varieties. There were the models who had been hired for the purpose, and they were attractive but not very imaginative, they looked like hookers on horses, and then there were the true followers, the daughters of delegates, the California children who belonged to one Goldwater club or another. They were younger than the models of course, they were most of them fifteen, sixteen, not even seventeen, wearing cowboy hats and white vests and shirts with fringes, white riding boots; nearly all of them were blonde and they had simple rather sweet faces, the sort of faces which television commercials used to use for such product fodder as biscuit batter before the commercials turned witty; these Goldwater girls had the faces of young ladies who listened to their parents, particularly to their fathers, they were full of character, but it was the character of tidiness, industry, subservience—unlike the Goldwater boys who looked on the whole not unintelligent though slightly maniacal in the singularity of their vision (the way young physicists look slightly maniacal) the girls seemed to be just about all quite dumb. There was one blonde little girl who was lovely, pretty enough to be a starlet, but she left a pang because her eyes when open were irremediably dim. Taken altogether, boys and girls, they were like

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the graduating class of a high school in Nebraska. The valedictorian would write his speech on the following theme: Why is the United States the Greatest Nation on Earth?

Whereas the kids who were for Scranton were prep-school or country-day. Some of the boys were plump and merry, some were mildly executive, but they shared in common that slightly complacent air of success which is the only curse of the fraternity president or leader of the student council. They were keen, they tended to be smooth, they had a penchant for bow ties and they were the kind to drive Triumphs or Pontiac convertibles, while the Goldwater boys would be borrowing their father's Dodge Dart (except for the one in a hundred who was automotive in his genius and so had built a dragster to top out at one-six-five). Then there were the Scranton boys who were still the descendants of Holden Caulfield. Faces like theirs had been seen for Stevenson in '60 in L.A. against J.F.K., and faces like theirs might appear (one would hope) in '68 for still another, but for now they were for the nearest candidate with wit, class, and the born foreknowledge of defeat. Slim, slightly mournful, certainly acerbic, and dubious of the fraternity presidents with whom they had made cause, the Holden Caulfields were out for Scranton, and looked a size overmatched by the girls who were for Scranton, good-looking most of them, slightly spoiled, saucy, full of peeves, junior debts doing their best to be cool and so wearing their hair long with a part down the center in such a way that the face, sexy, stripped of makeup (except for some sort of white libidinous wax on the lips) was half-concealed by a Gothic arch of falling tresses. Such were Scranton's parts, such were Goldwater's, as the children shaped up for the game.

In this state of . . . warfare between the noble ~~gent~~ landed interest and the new monied interest, the . . . monied interest is in its nature more ready for any adventure; and its ~~possessors~~ more disposed to new enterprises of any kind. Being of a recent acquisition, it falls in more naturally with any novelties. It is therefore the kind of wealth which will be resorted to by all who wish for change.

—BURKE, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Among the young industrial and financial monopolies of the West and Southwest that want a "bigger slice of the capitalist profit pie," Mr. Vasilyev listed H.L. Hunt, the Texas multimillionaire, the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, the Douglas Aircraft Company, the Boeing Company and the Northrup Corporation and the Giannini "financial empire" headed by the Bank of America.

These are the forces, Mr. Vasilyev said, that overcame the last-minute effort by "Wall Street, the Boston financial group and the Pennsylvania industrial complex" to promote the candidacy of Governor William W. Scranton of Pennsylvania at the Republican convention last month.

"But the 'new money' of the West proved to be stronger than the old money of the Northeast," the Soviet commentator said.

—New York Times, August 13, 1964

For a time it had been interesting history. You will remember that Scranton decided to run for nomination after a talk in Gettysburg on June 6 with President Eisenhower. He left with the solid assumption he would receive Eisenhower's support, solid enough for Governor Scranton's public-relations machine to announce this fact to the nation. That night or early next morning President Eisenhower received a phone call from George Humphrey. Eisenhower had been planning to visit Humphrey in Cleveland during the week of the Governor's Conference. But it developed Barry Goldwater had already been invited to be at Humphrey's home as well. A social difficulty thus presented itself. Humphrey resolved it in this fashion: Eisenhower would understand if, under the circumstances, Goldwater having been invited first . . .

Ike knew what that meant. If his old friend, crony, subordinate and private brain trust George Humphrey was willing to let the old gander-in-chief come out second on a collision of invitations, then Ike had picked a loser, Ike was in danger of being a loser himself. Well, Ike hadn't come out of Abilene, Kansas, all those years ago *ever* to end on the losing side. So he waddled back to the middle. He phoned Bill Scranton you will remember but an hour before Scranton was ready to announce his candidacy at the Governor's Conference on June 7, and told Scranton he could not be party to a "cabal." It was obvious to everybody in America that the old man had not labored through the night and through the day to make the truth of his first conversation with the young man stand out loud and clear in the high sun of ten a.m.

Still, one could not feel too sorry for the young man. It is never easy to grieve for a candidate of the Establishment, particularly the Republican Establishment of the East, which runs a spectrum from the Duke of Windsor to Jerome Zerbe, from Thomas E. Dewey to Lowell Thomas, from Drue Heinz to Tex and Jinx, from Maine to Nassau, New York to South of France, from Allen Dulles to Henry Luce, Igor Cassini to Joe Alsop, from Sullivan & Cromwell to Cartier's, and from Arthur Krock to Tuxedo Park.

Well, the last two years, all the way from Arthur Krock to Tuxedo Park, you could hear that Bill Scranton was going to be the Republican

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candidate in '64. Attempts might be made to argue: Goldwater looks strong, somebody could say at a dinner table; hasn't got a chance, the Establishment would give back—it's going to be Scranton. What was most impressive is that the Establishment did not bother to photograph their man, immerse him in publicity, or seek to etch his image. It was taken for granted that when the time came, doors would open, doors would shut, figures would be inserted, heads would be removed, a whiff of incense, a whisk of wickedness—Scranton would be the candidate.

Of course, Goldwater, or the Goldwater organization, or *some* organization, kept picking up delegates for Goldwater, and from a year away there was a bit of sentiment that it might be easier to make a deal with Goldwater, it might be easier to *moderate* him than to excise him. Once upon a time, J.P. Morgan would doubtless have sent some bright young man out on the Southern Pacific with a bag full of hundred-dollar bills. Now, however, possessing a mass media, the buy-off could take place in public. Last November, three weeks before J.F.K. was assassinated, *Life* Magazine put Goldwater on their cover wearing a pearl-gray Stetson and clean, pressed, faded blue work shirt and Levi's while his companion, a Palomino named Sunny, stood with one of the Senator's hands on his bridle, the other laid over the vein of his nose. It was Hopalong Cassidy all baby fat removed, it gave promise of the campaign to come: the image of Kennedy was now to be combated by Sheriff B. Morris Goldwater, the Silver Gun of the West. It was one of those pictures worth ten thousand speeches—it gave promise of delivering a million votes. It was also a way of stating that the Establishment was not yet unalterably opposed to Goldwater, and could yet help him, as it had with this cover. But inside the magazine across the heads of seven million readers, another message was delivered to the Senator.

Financial interests in Ohio, Illinois, Texas, Los Angeles and San Francisco—all centers of wealth independent of eastern ties—have been lining up money and intense local pressure for Goldwater. But . . . people fail to realize there's a difference in kinds of money. . . . Old money has political power but new money has only purchasing power. . . . When you get to a convention, you don't buy delegates. But you do put the pressure on people who control the delegates—the people who owe the old money for their stake.

Which was a way to remind Goldwater there were concessions to make. It was in foreign affairs that Goldwater had the most to explain about his policies.

Barry Goldwater [went Life's conclusion] represents a valuable impulse in the American politics of '64. He does not yet clearly represent all that a serious contender for the Presidency should. "Guts without depth" and "a man of one-sentence solutions" are the epithets of his critics. The time has come for him to rebut them if he can.

Two months later Goldwater announced his formal candidacy for the Republican nomination, and issued a pamphlet called "Senator Goldwater Speaks Out on the Issues." Written in that milk-of-magnesia style which is characteristic of such tracts, one could no longer be certain what he thought—he had moved from being a man of "one-sentence solutions" to a man who showed a preference for many imprecise sentences. Barry was treading water. As he did, his people, his organization, kept picking up delegates. It was not until he voted against the Civil Rights Bill that the open battle between old money and new was at last engaged. Too late on the side of the East. To anyone who knew a bit about the workings of the Establishment, a mystery was present. For unless the Establishment had become most suddenly inept, there was a buried motive in the delay, a fear, as if the Eastern money were afraid of some force in the American mind racing to power in defiance of them, some mystique from out the pure accelerating delirium of a crusade which would make cinder of the opposition. So they had waited, all candidates but Rockefeller had waited, none willing to draw the fires of the Right until Scranton was flushed by the ebb and flow, the mystery or murmur, in an old man's throat.

Somewhat later that morning, one saw Scranton in a press conference at the San Francisco Hilton. The Corinthian Room on the ballroom floor (Press Headquarters) was a white room, perhaps forty-five feet by forty feet with a low ceiling and a huge puff of a modern chandelier made up of pieces of plastic which looked like orange candy. The carpet was an electric plastic green, the bridge seats (some two hundred of them) were covered in a plastic the color of wet aspirin, and the walls were white, a hospital-sink white. The practical effect was to leave you feeling like a cold cut set in the white tray of a refrigerator.

The speaker, however, was like a fly annealed on the electric-light bulb of the refrigerator. The banks of lights were turned on him, movie lights, TV lights, four thousand watts in the eye must be the average price a politician pays for his press conference. It gives them all a high instant patina, their skin responding to the call of the wild; there is danger, because the press conference creates the moment when the actor must walk into the gears of the machine. While it is a hundred-to-one or a thousand-to-one he will make no mistake, his career can be extinguished by a

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blunder. Unless one is making news on a given day—which is to say an important announcement is to be made—the press conference is thus a virtuoso price to be paid for remaining in the game, since there are all too many days when it is to the interest of the speaker, or of his party, or his wing of the party, to make no particular news, but rather to repress news. Still, the speaker must not be too dull, or he will hurt his own position, his remarks will be printed too far back in the paper. So he must be interesting without being revealing. Whereas it is to the interest of the press to make him revealing. A delicate game of balance therefore goes on. Nixon used to play well until the day of his breakdown. Eisenhower was once good at it. Goldwater was considered bad at this game, sufficiently bad that at the convention he held but one press conference before his nomination, and in the six preceding weeks had given but two.

An opportunity to observe the game in operation came with Melvin Laird who tried to convince the Press Corps that the Republican platform was liberal, strong on civil rights, critical of extremists, and yet true to Goldwater. Laird, a smooth vigorous man with a bald domelike head, held the breech for half an hour, ducking questions with grace the way Negroes used once to duck baseballs in a carnival. When he got into trouble (it was after all a most untenable position), he called on one of the most necessary rules of the game, which is that you don't insult the good character of the speaker. So Laird would finally say, "We worked hard on this platform, it's a good platform, I'm proud of it." That made the questioners retreat and regroup for a new attack.

Now Scranton's press conferences were of course different—because no one could be certain if Scranton was part of the game or a wild hare diverting the chase from every true scent. The result was a choppiness to the questioning, a sense of irritation, a hint of vast contempt from the Press Corps; a reporter despises a politician who is not professional, for the game then becomes surrealistic, and it is the function of games to keep dreams, dread and surrealism out in the night where they belong. They would dog at Scranton, they would try to close: *Governor, Governor, could you give the name of any delegate who has moved over from Goldwater to you?* No, we are not prepared to say at this time, would come the answer. *Are there any?* (Titter from the audience.) Certainly. *But you do not care to say?* Not at this time. *Governor* (a new man now) *is there any truth to the rumor you are going to concede before the convention begins?* None whatsoever. *Governor, is it not true that you may be willing to run for vice-president?* For the eighty-eighth time, it is certainly not true. *Unqualifiedly?* Yes (said Scranton sadly) *unqualifiedly.*

He stood there like a saint, a most curious kind of saint. If he had been an actor he would have played the Dauphin to Ingrid Bergman's Joan of

Arc. He was obviously, on superficial study, a weak and stubborn man. One felt he had been spoiled when he was young by a lack of testing. It was not that he lacked bravery, it was that he had lacked all opportunity to be brave for much too long, and now he was not so much engaged in a serious political struggle as in a puberty rite. It was incredible that this pleasant urbane man, so self-satisfied, so civilized, so reasonable, so innocent of butchers' tubs and spleens and guts (that knowledge which radiates with full ceremony off Khrushchev's halo), should be now in fact the man the Eastern Establishment had picked as their candidate for President. He had a fatal flaw to his style, he was just very slightly delicate the way, let us say, a young Madison Avenue executive will seem petulant next to the surly vigor of a president of a steel corporation. Scranton had none of the heft of a political jockstrapper like Goldwater; no, rather he had the big wide thin-lipped mouth of a clown—hopeless! If the roles had been reversed, if it had been Scranton with six hundred delegates and Goldwater who led a rush in the last four weeks to steal the land, why Goldwater might still have won. Scranton was decent but some part of his soul seemed to live in the void. Doubtless he had been more formidable when he began, but he had been losing for four weeks, one loss after another, delegates, delegations, caucuses, he had been losing with Eisenhower, he had lost with Dirksen, he had lost Illinois, he was losing Ohio, his wheeler-dealers stood by idle wheels; you cannot deal when you are losing delegates, there is nothing to offer the delegate but the salvation of his soul, and the delegate has put salvation in hock a long time ago. So Scranton had begun with the most resistant of missions—there are few works in life so difficult as to pry delegates loose from a man who has a nomination virtually won. To be a delegate and stick with the loser is a kind of life, but no delegate can face the possibility of going from a winner to a loser; the losses are not measurable. People are in politics to win. In these circumstances, consider the political weight lifting required of Scranton. He announces his candidacy four weeks before the convention, Goldwater within fifty votes of the nomination. Is Scranton to pull delegates loose from such a scene by an unhappy faculty for getting pictures taken with his legs in the air doing polkas, R.C.A.F. exercises, and backhands in tennis? One knows Scranton's the product of a good many evenings when Eastern gentry circled around cigars and brandy and decided on poor Bill because he was finally not offensive to any. But it would have taken Paul Bunyan to claw into Goldwater's strength from four weeks out. His two hundred plus of Southern delegates were firm as marble, firm as their hatred of Civil Rights. And there was much other strength for Barry from the Midwest and the West, a hard core of delegates filled with hot scalding hatred for the

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Eastern Establishment. They were (unlike the children who were for Goldwater) this hard core of delegates, composed in large part of the kind of tourists who had been poisoning the air of hotel lobbies for twenty years. You could see them now with their Goldwater buttons, ensconced in every lobby, a Wasp Mafia where the grapes of wrath were stored. Not for nothing did the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant have a five-year subscription to *Reader's Digest* and *National Geographic*, high colonics and arthritis, silver-rimmed spectacles, punched-out bellies, and that air of controlled schizophrenia which is the merit badge for having spent one's life on Main Street. Indeed there was general agreement that the basic war was between Main Street and Wall Street. What was not seen so completely is that this war is the Wagnerian drama of the Wasp. For a century now the best of the White Protestants have been going from the farm to the town, leaving the small city for the larger one, transferring from Shaker Heights High to Lawrenceville, from Missouri State Teacher's to Smith, from Roast Turkey to Cordon Rouge, off rectitude onto wickedness, out of monogamy into *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, from *Jane Eyre* to *Candy*; it's a long trip from the American Legion's Annual Ball to the bust-outs of Southampton. There's the unheard cry of a wounded coyote in all the minor leagues of the Junior League, in all the tacky doings of each small town, the grinding rasp of envy rubs the liver of each big frog in his small pond, no hatred like hatred for the East in the hearts of those who were left behind: the horror in the heart of social life in America is that one never knows whether one is snubbed for too much or too little, whether one was too fine or not fine enough, too graceless or too possessed of special grace, too hungry for power or not ambitious enough—the questions are burning and never answered because the Establishment of the East rarely rejects, it merely yields or ignores, it promises and forgets, it offers to attend your daughter's party and somehow does not quite show up, or comes that fraction too late which is designed to spoil the high anticipation of the night. (Or worse, leaves a fraction too early.) The Wasps who were for Goldwater were the social culls of that Eastern Society which ran the land, yes, the Goldwater Wasps were the old doctors of Pasadena with their millions in stock and their grip on the A.M.A., the small-town newspaper editors, the president of the second most important bank, the wives of Texas oil, yes the wives and family of all the prominent and prosperous who had a fatal touch of the hick, all the Western ladies who did the Merengue at El Morocco on a trip to New York, and did it not quite well enough, you could just hear the giggles in the throat of Archie or Lightning Dick or Sad One-Eye, the Haitian and/or Jamaican who had taught them how. Yes the memory of those social failures is the saliva of intellectual violence.

The old Goldwater Wasps, the ones who had been sitting in the hotel lobbies, had an insane sting to their ideas—they were for birching America's bare bottom where Come-you-nisms collected: white and Negro equality; sexual excess; Jew ideas; dirty linen, muddled thinking, lack of respect for the Constitution. The Right in America had an impacted consistency of constipation to their metaphor. Small wonder they dreamed of a Republican purge. The Wasps were full of psychic wastes they could not quit—they had moved into the Middle West and settled the West, they had won the country, and now they were losing it to the immigrants who had come after and the descendants of slaves. They had watched as their culture was adulterated, transported, converted into some surrealist mélange of public piety *cum* rock and roll, product of the movies and television, of the mass media where sons of immigrants were so often king, yes the Wasps did not understand what was going on, they were not so ready after all to listen to those of their ministers who would argue that America had a heritage of sin and greed vis-à-vis the Negro, and those sins of the blood must be paid; they were not at all ready to listen to the argument that America's industry had been built out of the hardworking hard-used flesh of five generations of immigrants, no, they were Christian but they did not want to hear any more about the rights of others, they suffered from the private fear they were not as good, not as tough, not as brave as their great-grandfathers, they suffered from the intolerable fear that they were not nearly so good nor so tough as those other Christians close to two thousand years ago who faced Romans, so they were now afraid of the East which had dominated the fashion and style of their life, they were ready to murder the East, the promiscuous adulterous East—in a good fast nuclear war they might allow the Russians a fair crack at New York—yes they were loaded with one hatred: the Eastern Establishment was not going to win again, this time Main Street was going to take Wall Street. So Barry had his brothers, three or four hundred of the hardest delegates in the land, and they were ready to become the lifelong enemy of any delegate who might waver to Scranton.

That was the mood. That was the inner condition of the Goldwater delegates about the time Scranton announced he was going all out for the nomination and would pry these people loose from Barry. Henry Cabot Lodge came in from Vietnam. He was, you remember, going to help. Cynics in the Establishment were quick to inform you that Lodge was actually getting the hell out before the roof fell in, but Lodge gave this message to reporters:

... One of the things that always used to please me about being in Vietnam was the thought that I might as an older man be able to do something to help our soldiers who were out risking their lives.

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Well, a couple of weeks ago I ran into this captain who was one of the battalion advisors and he said, "Are you going back to help Governor Scranton?" And I said, "No." Well, he said, "You're not?" He said, "I think you ought to."

Well, that gave me quite a—that startled me, rather, because his attitude was: "I'm doing my duty out here, you'd better get back and do your duty pretty fast."

Obviously, no one had ever told Henry Cabot Lodge he might not necessarily be superb. So he came in, kingpin, boy, and symbol of the Establishment, and for two weeks he worked for Scranton (although most curiously—for Lodge was back in America a week before he even made arrangements to meet with Scranton). Still, Lodge announced his readiness to be first target of the Wasp Mafia. At the end of two weeks of picking up the telephone to call old friends only to have the telephone come back in the negative, Lodge looked like a man who had been handsome once. His color was a dirty wax yellow, his smile went up over the gums at the corner of his mouth and gave a hint of the skull the way ninety-year-old men look when their smile goes past the teeth. He looked like they had been beating him in the kidneys with his own liver. It was possible something had been beaten out of him forever.

Of course this was Sunday night—the first session of the convention was not ten hours off on Monday morning—and Scranton and Lodge had had a ferocious bad Sunday; the particular letter inviting Goldwater to debate Scranton before the convention had gone out earlier that day above the Governor's signature and it had gone so far as this:

Your managers say in effect that the delegates are little more than a flock of chickens whose necks will be wrung at will. . . . Goldwaterism has come to stand for a whole crazy-quilt collection of absurd and dangerous positions that would be soundly repudiated by the American people in November.

Denison Kitchel, Goldwater's General Director of the National Goldwater for President Committee, issued a statement:

Governor Scranton's letter has been read here with amazement. It has been returned to him.

Perhaps, upon consideration, the Governor will recognize the intemperate nature of his remarks. As it stands, they tragically reflect upon the Republican Party and upon every delegate to the convention.

Then Kitchel sent out mimeographed copies of Scranton's letter and his own reply to every Republican delegate. The Scranton mine caved in. Flooding at one end of the shaft, it was now burning at the other. Delegates do not like to be told they are a flock of chickens. It is one of those metaphors which fit like a sliver of bone up the nostril. Scranton was to

repudiate his letter the following day; he accepted responsibility but disowned the letter—the language was not his—which is to say he admitted he could not run a competent organization. Nor, it developed, could he protect his own people: the name of the assistant who had actually written the letter slipped out quick enough.

Thus, one night before the convention, the letter public, Scranton may just conceivably have moved from deep depression to outright agony. The Republicans were having a Gala that night, five hundred dollars a plate for funds, the press not admitted, although many, some from the front, some from the rear, found a way in, and all the Republican luminaries were there, Eisenhower, and the Luces, Mrs. Eisenhower, Henry Cabot Lodge, Thruston Morton, George Murphy, Ray Bliss, Mrs. Goldwater, Scranton. All but Barry. In a much-announced rage about the letter, Goldwater was boycotting the Gala. Of course, it was essentially an Establishment Gala, that slowly came clear, and therefore was in degree a wake—news of the letter was passing around. The dance floor was not to be crowded this night.

Scranton came in. He walked down the center aisle between the tables looking like one of the walking wounded. People came up to greet him and he smiled wanly and sadly and a little stiffly as if he were very weary indeed, as if he had just committed hara-kiri but was still walking. When introduced, he said with wan humor, "I've read your books"—something finally splendid about Scranton.

A minute later, Scranton and Eisenhower came together. It was their first meeting in San Francisco; the General had just arrived that day, come into the Santa Fe depot after crossing the country by train. He was Scranton's last hope; he might still give momentum to the bogged-down tanks of Scranton's attack—what, after all, was the measure of magic? So Scranton must have looked for every clue in Eisenhower's greeting. There were clues running all over. Ike stood up from his table, he pumped Scranton's hand, he held his elbow, he wheeled about with him, he grinned, he smiled widely, he grinned again, his face flushed red, red as a two-week-old infant's face, his eyes twinkled, he never stopped talking, he never took his hands off Scranton, he never looked him in the eye. It was the greeting of a man who is not going to help another man.

Next day, Eisenhower dropped William Warren Scranton. He had a press conference at the Hilton in which he succeeded in saying nothing. It was obvious now he would not come out for anyone, it was also obvious he would not join the Moderates' call for a stronger civil-rights plank. "Well," he said, "he [Melvin Laird] came to see me, and the way he explained it to me, it sounded all right." Asked about an amendment the Moderates wished to put in the plank, "The authority to use America's

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nuclear weapons belongs to the President of the United States," Eisenhower thought "this statement was perfectly all right with me because it reaffirms what the Constitution means." Still he would not fight for it. Asked how he reacted to the idea of a debate before the entire convention between Senator Goldwater and Governor Scranton, a reference directed to Scranton's now famous letter of the day before, Eisenhower said, "This, of course, would be a precedent, and I am not against precedents. I am not particularly for them." A little earlier he had said, "I really have no feeling of my own." He didn't. He was in a private pond. He had been in one for years. Something had been dying in him for years, the proportions and magnitude of his own death no doubt, and he was going down into the cruelest of fates for an old man, he was hooked on love like an addict, not large love, but the kind of mild tolerant love which shields an old man from hatred. It was obvious that Eisenhower had a deep fear of the forces which were for Goldwater. He did not mind with full pride any longer if people felt contempt for him, but he did not want to be hated hard by anyone. So he could not declare himself, not for anything, and as he made his lapses in syntax, in word orders, in pronunciations, they took on more prominence than ever they had. At times, they were as rhythmic as a tic, or a dog scratching at a bite. He would say, "We must be *objective*, I mean *objective*, we must be objective . . ." and on he would go as if he were sinking very slowly and quietly into the waters of his future death which might be a year away or ten years away but was receiving him nonetheless like a marsh into which he disappeared twitch by twitch, some beating of wet wings against his fate.

" . . . Looke, Lord, and finde both Adams met in me."

—JOHN DONNE

Now, as for Goldwater, he had dimensions. Perhaps they were no more than contradictions, but he was not an easy man to comprehend in a hurry. His wife, for example, had been at the Gala, sitting with some family and friends, but at one of the less agreeable tables on the floor, off to the side and sufficiently back of the stage so that you could not see the entertainer. It seemed a curious way for the Establishment to treat the wife of the leading contender, but I was assured by the young lady who brought me over for the introduction that Mrs. Goldwater preferred it that way. "She hates being the center of attention," I was told. Well, she turned out to be a shy attractive woman with a gentle not altogether happy but sensual face. There was something nice about her and very

vulnerable. Her eyes were moist, they were luminous. It was impossible not to like her. Whereas her daughters were attractive in a different fashion. "I want the best ring in this joint, buster," I could hear them say.

Goldwater's headquarters, however, were at a remove from the ladies. Occupying the fourteenth and fifteenth floors of the Mark Hopkins, they were not easy to enter. The main elevators required a wait of forty-five minutes to go up. The alternate route was off the mezzanine through a pantry onto a service car. A half-filled twenty-gallon garbage can stood by the service-elevator door. You went squeezed up tight with high and low honchos for Goldwater, plus waiters with rolling carts working room service. Once there, the fourteenth and fifteenth floors were filthy. A political headquarters is never clean—stacks of paper, squeezed-out paper cups, typewriter carbons on the floor, jackets on wire hangers all angles on a rack—a political headquarters is like the City Room of a newspaper. But Goldwater's headquarters were filthier than most. There was a general detritus like the high-water mark on a beach. The armchairs were dusty and the sofas looked like hundred-dollar newlywed sofas dirty in a day. The air had the beat-out cigar smell of the waiting room in a large railroad station. It had nothing to do with the personnel. No one on the fourteenth or fifteenth floor had anything to do with his surroundings. You could have dropped them in Nymphenburg or a fleabag off Eighth Avenue—the rooms would come to look the same. A room was a place with a desk where the work got out.

They had something in common—professional workers for Goldwater—something not easy to define. They were not like the kids out in the street, nor did they have much in common with the old cancer-guns in the lobby; no, the worst of these workers looked like divinity students who had been expelled from the seminary for embezzling class funds and still felt they were nearest to J.C.—there was a dark blank fanaticism in their eyes. And the best of the Goldwater professionals were formidable, big rangy men, some lean, some flabby, with the hard distasteful look of topflight investigators for fire-insurance companies, field men for the F.B.I., or like bright young district attorneys, that lean flat look of the hunter, full of moral indignation and moral vacuity. But the total of all the professional Goldwater people one saw on the fourteenth and fifteenth floors was directly reminiscent of a guided tour through the F.B.I. in the Department of Justice Building in Washington, that same succession of handsome dull faces for guide, hair combed straight back or combed straight from a part, eyes lead shot, noses which offered nothing, mouths which were functional, good chins, deft moves. A succession of these men took the tourists through the halls of the F.B.I. and read aloud the signs on the exhibits for us and gave short lectures about the function of the F.B.I. (guard us from

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the enemy without, the enemy within, Communism and Crime—the statements offered in simple organizational prose of the sort used in pamphlets which welcome new workers to large corporations, soldiers to new commands, freshmen to high school, and magazine readers to editorials). The tourists were mainly fathers and sons. The wives were rugged, the kind who are built for dungarees and a green plaid hunting jacket, the sisters and daughters plain and skinny, no expression. They all had lead shot for eyes, the lecturers and the tourists. Most of the boys were near twelve and almost without exception had the blank private faces which belong to kids who kill their old man with a blast, old lady with a butcher knife, tie sister with telephone cord and hide out in the woods for three days. The climax of the tour was a demonstration by the F.B.I. agent how to use a tommy gun. For ten minutes he stitched targets, using one shot at a time, bursts of three, full magazine, he did it with the mild grace of a body-worker hitting small rivets, there was solemn applause after each burst of shots.

That was a part of the Republic, and here it was at Headquarters for Goldwater. The faces in these rooms were the cream of the tourists and the run of the F.B.I.; there was a mood like the inside of a prison: enclosed air, buried urgency. But that was not altogether fair. The sense of a prison could come from the number of guards and the quality of their style. They were tough dull Pinkertons with a tendency to lean on a new visitor. One desire came off them. They would not be happy if there were no orders to follow. With orders, they were ready to put the arm on Bill Scranton, Nelson Rockefeller, or General Eisenhower (if told to). Probably they would put the arm on Johnson if he appeared and was ordered out. Naturally they were not there for that, they were there to defend Headquarters from mobs (read: niggers) and the Senator from black assassination. It made sense up to a point: Goldwater was in more danger than Scranton, at least so long as Scranton showed no sign of winning; just that day, Sunday, there had been a civil-rights anti-Goldwater march down Market Street. The heavy protection was nonetheless a fraud. No mob was getting to the fourteenth floor, nor to Goldwater's fort on the fifteenth (a separate barricade of Pinkertons guarded the twenty-odd steps), no mob was going to get all the way up with just those three elevators and a wait of forty-five units of sixty seconds each, no assassin was likely to try Headquarters when there were opportunities on the street; no, the atmosphere was created to create atmosphere, the aura at Headquarters was solemnity, debris underfoot, and grave decisions, powers put to the service of order, some conspiracy of the vault, a dedication to the necessity of taking power. That was Headquarters. One never got to see Goldwater in the place.

There was opportunity, however, to come within three feet of him later that day, once at the caucus of the Florida delegation in the Beverly Plaza, once on the street moving from hotel to hotel (Pinkertons no longer in evidence now—just cops) and again at the Clift, where he talked to the Washington delegation. There was excitement watching Barry go to work with a group, an intensity in the air, a religious devotion, as if one of the most urbane priests of America was talking at a Communion breakfast, or as if the Principal-of-the-Year was having a heart-to-heart with honor students. The Florida delegation, meeting in a dingy little downstairs banquet room, was jammed. The afternoon had turned hot for San Francisco. Eighty degrees outside, it may have been ninety in the room. Everybody was perspiring. Barry sat in the front, a spotlight on him, a silver film of perspiration adding to his patina, and the glasses, those black-framed glasses, took on that odd life of their own, that pinched severity, that uncompromising idealism which made Goldwater kin to the tight-mouthed and the lonely. Talking in a soft modest voice, he radiated at this moment the skinny boyish sincerity of a fellow who wears glasses but is determined nonetheless to have a good time. Against all odds. It was not unreminiscent of Arthur Miller: that same mixture of vast solemnity and unspoiled boyhood, a sort of shucks and aw shit in the voice. "Well, you see," said Goldwater, talking to the Florida delegation, "if I was to trust the polls right now, I'd have to say I didn't have a chance. But why should I trust the polls? Why should any of us trust the polls? They've been wrong before. They'll be wrong again. Man is superior to the machine. The thing to remember is that America is a spiritual country, we're founded on belief in God, we may wander a little as a country, but we never get too far away. I'm ready to say the election is going to give the Democrats a heck of a surprise. Why, I'll tell you this," Goldwater said, sweating mildly, telling the folks from Florida just as keen as if he was alone with each one of them, each one of these elderly gents and real-estate dealers and plain women with silver-rimmed eyeglasses, "tell you this, I'm doing my best not to keep this idea a secret, but I think we're not only going to give the Democrats a heck of a surprise, I think we're going to win. [Applause, cheers.] In fact I wouldn't be in this if I didn't think we were going to win. [Applause.] Why, as I sometimes tell my wife, I'm too young to retire and too old to go back to work." [Laughter, loud cheers.] Goldwater was done. He smiled shyly, his glasses saying: I am a modest man, and I am severe on myself. As he made his route to the door, the delegates were touching him enthusiastically.

Back on the street—he was walking the blocks to the Hotel Clift where the Washington State delegation was having a Goldwater reception—his tail consisted of fifty or sixty excited people, some Florida delegates who

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didn't wish to lose sight of the man, plus a couple of cops glad to have the duty. Cars slowed down to look at him; one stopped. A good-looking woman got out and cheered. There was something in the way she did it. Just as strange Negroes scattered at random through a white audience may act in awareness of one another, so the Goldwater supporters in their thirties and forties gave off a similar confidence of holding the secret. This very good-looking woman yelled, "You go, Barry, you go, go." But there was anger and elation in her voice, as if she were declaring, "We're going to get the country back." And Goldwater smiled modestly and went on. He looked a little in fever. Small wonder. He could be President of the United States in less than half a year, he could stop a sniper's bullet he never knew when, he was more loved and hated than any man in America, and inside all this was just *him*, the man who adjusted radio knobs in the early morning in order to transmit a little better, and now conceivably adjusted a few knobs. . . .

At the Hotel Clift he talked to the Washington delegates. We were definitely back in high school. That was part of Goldwater's deal—he brought you back to the bright minted certitudes of early patriotism when you knew the U.S. was the best country on earth and there was no other. Yes, his appeal would go out to all the millions who were now starved and a little sour because some part of their life had ended in high school, and the university they had never seen. But then Barry had had but one year of college—he had indeed the mind of a powerful freshman. "I want to thank you folks from Washington for giving me this warm greeting. Of course, Washington is the name of a place I often like to get the heck out of, but I'm sure I won't confuse the two right here." [Laughter.] He was off, a short political speech. In the middle, extremism. "I don't see how anybody can be an extremist who believes in the Constitution. And for those misguided few who pretend to believe in the Constitution, but in secret don't, well they may be extremists, but I don't see any necessity to legislate against them. I just feel sorry for them." [Cheers. Applause. Happiness at the way Barry delivered anathemas.] At a certain point in the speech, he saw a woman in the audience whom he recognized, and stopped in the middle of a phrase. "Hi, honey," he sang out like a traveling salesman, which brought a titter from the delegation, for his voice had shifted too quickly, the codpiece was coming off, Rain and the Reverend Davidson. Something skinny, itchy, hard as a horselaugh, showed—he was a cannoneer with a hairy ear. Goldwater went on, the good mood continued; then at the end, speech done, he turned down a drink but said in his best gee-whizzer, "I'm sorry I have to leave because gosh I'd like to break a few with you." Laughter, and he took off head down, a little modest in the exit, a little red in the neck.

end

There was entertainment at the Republican Gala on Sunday night. The climax was a full marching band of bagpipers. They must have been hired for the week since one kept hearing them on the following days, and at all odd times, heard them even in my hotel room at four a.m., for a few were marching in the streets of San Francisco, sounding through the night, giving off the barbaric evocation of the Scots, all valor, wrath, firmitude, and treachery—the wild complete treachery of the Scots finding its way into the sound of the pipes. They were a warning of the fever in the heart of the Wasp. There are sounds which seem to pass through all the protective gates in the ear and reach into some nerve where the eschatology is stored. Few parents have failed to hear it in the cry of their infant through the morning hours of a bad night—stubbornness, fury, waste, and the promise of revenge come out of a flesh half-created by one's own flesh; the knowledge is suddenly there that seed is existential, no paradise resides in seed, seed can be ill-inspired and go to a foul gloomy end. Some find their part of the truth in listening to jazz—it is moot if any white who had no ear for jazz can know the passion with which some whites become attached to the Negro's cause. So, too, listening to the bagpipes, you knew this was the true music of the Wasps. There was something wild and martial and bottomless in the passion, a pride which would not be exhausted, a determination which might never end, perhaps should never end, the Faustian rage of a white civilization was in those Highland wails, the cry of a race which was born to dominate and might never learn to share, and never learning, might be willing to end the game, the end of the world was in the sound of the pipes. Or at very least the danger one would come closer to the world's end. So there was a vast if all-private appeal in listening to the pipes shrill out the herald of a new crusade, something jagged, Viking, of the North in the air, a sense of breaking ice and barbaric shields, hunters loose in the land again. And this had an appeal which burrowed deep, there was excitement at the thought of Goldwater getting the nomination, as if now finally all one's personal suicides, all the deaths of the soul accumulated by the past, all the failures, all the terrors, could find purge in a national situation where a national murder was being planned (the Third World War) and one's own suicide might be lost in a national suicide. There was that excitement, that the burden of one's soul (always equal to the burden of one's personal responsibility) might finally be lifted—what a release was there! Beauty was inspired by the prospect. For if Goldwater won, and the iron power of the iron people who had pushed him forth—as echoed in the iron of the Pinkertons on the fourteenth and fifteenth floor—now pushed forth over the nation an iron regime with totalitarianism seizing the TV in every frozen dinner, well then at last a true underground might

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form; and liberty at the thought of any catalyst which could bring it on. Yes, the Goldwater movement excited the depths because the apocalypse was brought more near, and like millions of other whites, I had been leading a life which was a trifle too pointless and a trifle too full of guilt and my gullet was close to nausea with the endless compromises of an empty liberal center. So I followed the four days of the convention with something more than simple apprehension. The country was taking a turn, the colors were deepening, the knives of the afternoon were out, something of the best in American life might now be going forever; or was it altogether to the opposite? and was the country starting at last to take the knots of its contradictions up from a premature midnight of nightmare into the surgical terrains of the open skin? Were we in the beginning, or turning the middle, of our worst disease? One did not know any longer, you simply did not know any longer, but something was certain: the country was now part of the daily concern. One worried about it for the first time, the way you worried about family or work, a good friend or the future, and that was the most exceptional of emotions.

II

"... When men are too much confined to professional and faculty habits, and as it were inveterate in the recurrent employment of that narrow circle, they are rather disabled than qualified for whatever depends on the knowledge of mankind, on experience in mixed affairs, on a comprehensive, connected view of the various, complicated, external and internal interests, which go to the formation of that multifarious thing called a state."

—BURKE, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

If the details of the Republican convention of 1964 were steeped in concern, it was nonetheless not very exciting, not technically. As a big football game, the score might have been 76 to 0, or 76 to 3. (There were sentimentalists who would claim that Rockefeller kicked a field goal.) Compared however to the Republican Convention of 1940 when Wendell Willkie came from behind to sweep the nomination on the sixth ballot, or the 1952 convention when Eisenhower defeated Taft on the second roll call of the states, compared even to the Democratic Convention of 1960, there were few moments in this affair, and nothing even remotely comparable in excitement to the demonstration for Adlai Stevenson four years ago when Eugene McCarthy put him in nomination. Yet this convention of 1964 would remain as one of the most important in our history; it took place with religious exaltation for some, with dread for others, and in

sheer trauma for the majority of the press and television who were present on the scene. For them it offered four days of anxiety as pure and deep as a child left alone in a house. The purpose of the press in America has been to tinker with the machine, to adjust, to prepare a seat for new valves and values, to lubricate, to excuse, to justify, to serve in the maintenance of the Establishment. From I. F. Stone on the left, going far to the right of Joseph Alsop, over almost so far as David Lawrence, the essential understanding of the mass media is that the machine of the nation is a muddle which is endlessly grateful for ministrations of the intellect; so a game is played in which the Establishment always forgives the mass media for its excesses, and the mass media brings its sense of civilization (adjustment, psychoanalysis, responsibility, and the milder shores of love) to the service of the family Establishment. Virtually everything is forgiven by both sides. The contradictory remarks of politicians are forgotten, the more asinine predictions of pundits are buried with mercy. The Establishment for example would not remind Joe Alsop that in March 1964 he had written, "No serious Republican politician, even of the most Neanderthal type, any longer takes Goldwater seriously." No, the Press was not to be twitted for the limits of their technique because half their comprehension of the nation derived after all from material supplied by the Establishment; the other half came from conversations with each other. All too often the Press lives in the investigative condition of a lover who performs the act for two minutes a day and talks about it for twenty hours of the twenty-four. So a daisy chain like the *National Review* proves to be right about Goldwater's strength and the intellectual Establishment with its corporate resources is deep in error.

An explanation? Those who hold power think the devil is best contained by not mentioning his name. This procedure offers a formidable shell in which to live, but its cost is high; the housing is too ready to collapse when the devil decides to show. There has been no opportunity to study him. Just as a generation of the Left, stifled and ignored through the McCarthyism of the Fifties and the Eisenhowerism of the Fifties, caused panic everywhere when they emerged as the Beat Generation, so another generation, a generation of the Right, has been stifled, their actions reported inaccurately, their remarks distorted, their ideals (such as they are) ignored, and their personal power underestimated. The difference however is that the Beat Generation was a new flock of early Christians gathered prematurely before the bomb, an open-air asylum for the gentle and the mad, where in contrast the underground generation of the Right is a frustrated posse, a convention of hangmen who subscribe to the principle that the executioner has his rights as well. The liberal mind collapses

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before this notion but half of nature may be contained in the idea that the weak are happiest when death is quick. It is a notion which since the Nazis has been altogether detestable, but then the greatest intellectual damage the Nazis may have done was to take a few principles from nature and pervert them root and nerve. In the name of barbarism and a return to primitive health they accelerated the most total and surrealistic aspects of civilization. The gas chamber was a full albino descendant of the industrial revolution.

But that is a digression. To return to the as yet milder political currents of the Left and the Right in America, one could say the Beat Generation was a modest revolution, suicidal in the center of its passion. At its most militant it wished for immolation rather than power, it desired only to be left free enough to consume itself. Yet in the mid-Fifties liberals reacted with a profound terror, contumely, and ridicule to its manifestations as if their own collective suicide (the private terror of the liberal spirit is invariably suicide, not murder) was to be found in the gesture of the Beat. What then the panic of the liberal Establishment before a revolution of the Right whose personal nightmare might well be their inability to contain their most murderous impulse, a movement of the Right whose ghost is that unlaidd blood and breath of Nazism which has hovered these twenty years like a succubus over the washed-out tissues of civilization. Consider but one evidence of the fear: that part of the Press called Periodicals sat in a section of the gallery to the left of the speakers in the Cow Palace. There were one hundred writers in this Periodical section of the gallery and six passes to get down to the floor where one could talk to delegates and in turn be looked at by them. Of those six passes, one or two were always available. Which meant that the majority of writers did not try to get down to the floor very often. Sitting next to one another the writers were content to observe—there were killers on the floor.

There were. It was a convention murderous in mood. The mood of this convention spoke of a new kind of society. Chimeras of fascism hung like fogbank. And high enthusiasm. Some of the delegates were very happy. "Viva," would shout a part of the gallery. "Olé," would come the answer. There was an éclat, a bull roar, a mystical communion in the sound even as *Sieg Heil* used to offer its mystical communion. *Viva-Olé*. Live-Yay! Live-Yay! It was the new chic of the mindless. The American mind had gone from Hawthorne and Emerson to the Frug, the Bounce, and Walking the Dog, from *The Flowering of New England* to the cerebrality of professional football in which a quarterback must have not only heart, courage, strength and grace but a mind like an I.B.M. computer. It marks the turn we have taken from the Renaissance. There too was the ideal of a hero with heart, courage, strength, and grace, but he was expected to

possess the mind of a passionate artist. Now the best heroes were—in the sense of the Renaissance—mindless: Y. A. Tittle, John Glenn, Tracy, Smiling Jack; the passionate artists were out on the hot rods, the twist band was whipping the lovers, patriotism was a football game, a fascism would come in (if it came) on Live-Yay! Let's live-yay! The hype had made fifty million musical-comedy minds; now the hype could do anything; it could set high-school students to roar *Viva-Olé*, and they would roar it while victims of a new totalitarianism would be whisked away to a new kind of camp—hey, honey, do you twist, they would yell into the buses.

"When men of rank sacrifice all ideas of dignity to an ambition without a distinct object, and work with low instruments and for low ends, the whole composition becomes low and base."

—BURKE, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

First major event of the convention was Eisenhower's appearance at the Cow Palace to give a speech on Tuesday afternoon. The arena was well-chosen for a convention. Built in the Thirties when indoor sports stadiums did not yet look like children's nurseries, the Cow Palace offered echoes—good welterweights and middleweights had fought here, there was iron in the air. And the Republicans had installed the speaker's platform at one end of the oval; the delegates sat therefore in a file which was considerably longer than it was wide, the speaker was thus installed at the handle of the sword. (Whereas the Democrats in 1960 had put the speaker in the middle of the oval.) But this was the party after all of Republican 'fathers rather than Democratic mothers. If there were any delegates to miss the psychic effect of this decision, a huge banner raised behind the speaker confronted them with the legend: Of the people, By the people, For the people. "Of the people" was almost invisible; "By the people" was somewhat more clear; "For the people" was loud and strong. This was a party not much "of the people" but very much "for the people," it presumed to know what was good for them.

And for fact, that had always been Ike's poor lone strength as a speaker, he knew what was good for you. He dipped into his speech, "here with great pride because I am a Republican," "my deep dedication to Republicanism"—he had not been outward bound for five minutes before the gallery was yawning. Ike had always been a bore, but there had been fascination in the boredom when he was President—this, after all, was *the* man. Now he was just another hog wrassler of rhetoric; he pinned a few phrases in his neat determined little voice, and a few phrases pinned him

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back. Ike usually fought a speech to a draw. It was hard to listen. All suspense had ended at Monday morning's press conference. Ike would not come out in support of Scranton. So the mind of the Press drifted out with the mind of the gallery. If Ike said a few strong words about the Civil Rights Bill—"Republicans in Congress to their great credit voted far more overwhelmingly than did our opponents to pass the Civil Rights Bill"—it meant nothing. The Moderates tried to whoop it up, the Goldwater delegations looked on in ranked masses of silence. Ike went on. He gave the sort of speech which takes four or five columns in the *New York Times* and serves to clot the aisles of history. He was still, as he had been when he was President, a cross between a boy and an old retainer. The boy talked, earnest, innocent, a high-school valedictorian debating the affirmative of, Resolved: Capitalism is the Most Democratic System on Earth; and the old retainer quavered into the voice, the old retainer could no longer live without love.

Ike had bored many a crowd in his time. He had never bored one completely—he had always known how to get some token from a mob. Ever since 1952, he had been giving little pieces of his soul to draw demonstrations from the mob. You could always tell the moment. His voice shifted. Whenever he was ready to please the crowd, he would warn them by beginning to speak with a brisk little anger. Now it came, now he said it. ". . . Let us particularly scorn the *divisive* efforts of those outside our family, including sensation-seeking columnists and commentators [beginning of a wild demonstration] because," said Ike, his voice showing a glint of full spite, "I assure you that these are people who couldn't care less about the good of our party." He was right, of course. That was not why he said it, however; he said it to repay the Press for what they had said about him these last three weeks; the sensation they had been seeking was—so far as he was concerned—to arouse needles of fury in an old man's body—he said what he said for revenge. Mainly he said it to please the Goldwater crowd, there was the hint of that in his voice. The Goldwater delegations and the gallery went into the first large demonstration of the convention. Trumpets sounded, heralds of a new crusade: cockroaches, columnists, and Communists to be exterminated. There were reports in the papers next day that delegates shook their fists at newspapermen on the floor, and at the television men with their microphones. The mass media is of course equipped for no such war. Some of the men from the mass media looked like moon men: they wore red helmets and staggered under the load of a portable camera which must have weighed fifty pounds and was packed on their back; others of the commentators had portable mikes and hats with antennae. To the delegates they must have looked like insects grown to the size of a man. Word whipped in to the

delegations from the all-call telephone in the office trailer of the Goldwater command post back of the Cow Palace. Cut the demonstration, was the word from F. Clifton White. The demonstration subsided. But the Press did not, the rest of the mass media did not. They remain in a state of agitation: if Ike was ready to accuse, anyone could serve as hangman. Anyone would. Anyone they knew.

Much later that Tuesday, after the full reading of the full platform, came a debate between the Moderates and the Conservatives. Success in politics comes from putting one's seat to a chair and sitting through dull wrangles in order to be present after midnight when the clubhouse vote is cast. Playboys do not go far in these circumstances, nor adventurers; the mediocre recognized early that a society was evolving which would enable them to employ the very vice which hitherto had made life intolerable—mediocrity itself. So the cowardly took their place in power. They had the superior ability to breathe in hours of boredom.

Politics was now open however to the disease of the bored—magic. Magic can sweep you away. Once a decade, once every two decades, like a big wind which eludes the weather charts and seems to arise from the caverns of the ocean itself, so does a hurricane sweep a convention. It happened with Wendell Willkie in 1940; it flickered on the horizon with Stevenson in '60; it was Scranton's hope to work a real debate on the last session before the balloting. If he could win even once on some small point, rumors of magic could arise. The Moderates had forced therefore a floor fight to propose a few amendments to the Republican platform of '64. One: that only the President have the authority to use America's nuclear weapons. Two: repudiate the John Birch Society. Three: introduce a language of approval for the Civil Rights Act. The chances of success were small at best: only an extraordinary assault on the emotions of the Goldwater delegations could sway them to vote yes for the amendments.

The Moderates however went to battle moderately. Their speakers were impressive (as such a quality is measured in the *Times*). They were Christian Herter, Hugh Scott, Clifford Case, George Romney, Lindsay, Javits, Rockefeller. They were not, however, lively speakers, not this night. Lindsay and Javits were presentable in professional groups; devoted to detailed matters, they spoke with reason; Case spoke like a shy high-school teacher; Christian Herter was reminiscent of Mr. Chips; Hugh Scott owned no fire. Carlino (Majority Leader in the New York Assembly) sounded like a successful restaurant owner. And Governor Romney of Michigan had his own special amendments, he was a moderation of the moderates. As he spoke, he looked like a handsome version of Boris Karloff, all honesty, big-jawed, soft-eyed, eighty days at sea on a cockeyed passion.

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He spoke in a loud strong voice yet one sensed a yaw at the center of his brain which left his cerebrations as lost as Karloff's lost little voice. No, the only excitement had come at the beginning. Rockefeller was not a man who would normally inspire warmth. He had a strong decent face and something tough as the rubber in a handball to his makeup, but his eyes had been punched out a long time ago—they had the distant lunar glow of the small sad eyes you see in a caged chimpanzee or gorilla. Even when hearty he gave an impression the private man was remote as an astronaut on a lost orbit. But Rockefeller had his ten minutes at the podium and as he talked of suffering "at first-hand" in the California primary from the methods of "extremist elements," threatening letters unsigned, bomb threats, "threats of personal violence," telephone calls, "smear and hate literature," "strong-arm and goon tactics," the gallery erupted, and the boos and jeers came down. Rockefeller could have been Leo Durocher walking out to the plate at Ebbets Field to protest an umpire's decision after Leo had moved from the Dodgers to the Giants. Again the all-call in the Goldwater trailer outside the Cow Palace was busy, again the delegations were told to be silent, and obeyed. But the gallery would not stop, and Thruston Morton, the Chairman, came forward like one of the sweepers in *Camino Real* to tell Kilroy his time was up. Rockefeller had his moment. "You quiet them," he said to Morton. "That's your job. I want my time to speak." And there was a conception of Rockefeller finally—he had few ideas and none of them were his own, he had a personality which was never in high focus (in the sense that Bobby Kennedy and Jimmy Hoffa are always in high focus) but he had an odd courage which was profound—he could take strength from defying a mob. Three hundred thousand years ago, a million years ago, some gorilla must have stood up to an enraged tribe and bellowed back and got away alive and human society was begun. So Rocky finally had his political moment which was precisely right for him.

But the other Moderates did not. There was in their collective voice a suggestion of apology: let-us-at-least-be-heard. Speakers who were opposed to the amendments sounded as effective, sometimes more. Ford from Michigan spoke after Rockefeller, and had better arguments. It was not, he suggested, the purpose of a party which believed in free speech to look for formulas to repress opinion. He was right, even if he might not be so ready to protect Communists as Reactionaries. And Senator Dominick of Colorado made a bright speech employing an editorial from *The New York Times* of 1765 which rebuked Patrick Henry for extreme ideas. Delegates and gallery whooped it up. Next day Dominick confessed. He was only "spoofing." He had known: there was no *New York Times* in 1765. Nor was there any editorial. An old debater's trick. If there are no

good facts, make them up. Be quick to write your own statistics. There was some umbilical tie between the Right Wing and the psychopathic liar.

More speakers came on. After four or five speakers for each side, a vote would come. Each time the amendment was voted down. Eight hundred and ninety-so-many to four hundred-and-a-few, went the votes. Hours went by, three hours of debate. After a while, the Moderates came collectively to seem like a club fighter in still another loser. A vacuum hung over empty cries for civil rights. One wondered why a Negro delegate loyal to the Party for thirty years had not been asked by the Moderates to make a speech where he could say: *You are sending me home to my people a mockery and a shame. My people have been saying for thirty years that the Republican Party has no love for the colored man, and I have argued back. Tonight you will tell me I was wrong. You are denying me the meaning of my life.*

Such a speech (and there were Negro delegates to give it) might not have turned the vote, doubtless it would not have turned the vote, but it was the Moderates' sole chance for an explosion which could loose some petrified emotion, some magic. They did not take it. Probably they did not take it because they did not care that much if they lost. By now, it might be better to lose decisively than come nearer to winning and divide the party more. So they accepted their loser's share of the purse, which is that they could go back East and say: I campaigned at the convention for civil rights. Tomorrow was nominating day. The last chance in a hundred had been lost.

. . . *The Bleat, the Bark, Bellow & Roar—
Are Waves that Beat on Heaven's Shore. . . .*

—WILLIAM BLAKE, *Auguries of Innocence*

Everett Dirksen gave the nominating speech for Goldwater, Dirksen from Illinois, the Silver Fox of the Senate, the Minority Leader, the man who had done the most, many would claim, to pass the Civil Rights Bill, for it was his coalition with Hubert Humphrey on cloture which had carried the day. "I guess Dirksen finally got religion," Humphrey said, and Dirksen, making his final speech for the bill, declared, "There is no force so powerful as an idea whose time has come." It was said that when Goldwater voted against the bill, Dirksen would not speak to him. Two weeks later, Dirksen agreed to nominate Goldwater. "He's got it won, that's all," Dirksen said of Goldwater, "this thing has gone too far."

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This day, nominating day, any orator could have set fire to the Cow Palace. The gallery and Goldwater delegations were as tense and impatient as a platoon of Marines going down to Tijuana after three weeks in the field. But this day Dirksen had no silver voice. He made a speech which contained such nuggets as, "In an age of do-gooders, he was a good doer." Dirksen was an old organist who would play all the squeaks in all the stops, rustle over all the dead bones of all the dead mice in all the pipes. He naturally made a large point that Barry Goldwater was "the grandson of the peddler." This brought no pleasure to the crowd. Main Street was taking Wall Street; Newport Beach, California, would replace Newport; and General Goldwater, Air Force Reserve, possessed sufficient cachet to negotiate the move; but not the grandson of the peddler. Dirksen however went on and on, making a sound like the whirl of the air conditioning in a two-mile tunnel.

When he was done, they blew Dirksen down, the high screams of New Year's Eve went off, a din of screamers, rattles, and toots, a clash of bands, a dazzle of posters in phosphorescent yellow and orange and gold, the mad prance of the state standards, wild triumphant pokes and jiggles, war spears, crusader's lances, an animal growl of joy, rebel cries, eyes burning, a mad nut in each square jaw, *Viva-Olé, Viva-Olé*, bugle blasts and rallying cries, the call of heralds, and a fall from the rafters of a long golden rain, pieces of gold foil one inch square, hundreds of thousands of such pieces in an endless gentle shimmer of descent. They had put a spot on the fall—it was as if sunlight had entered every drop of a fine sweet rain. I ran into Mike Wallace on the floor. "The guy who thought of this was a genius," said Mike. And the sounds of the band went up to meet the rain. There was an unmistakable air of beauty, as if a rainbow had come to a field of war, or Goths around a fire saw visions in a cave. The heart of the beast had loosed a primitive call. Civilization was worn thin in the center and to the Left the black man raised his primitive cry; now to the far Right were the maniacal blue eyes of the other primitive. The jungles and the forests were readying for war. For a moment, beauty was there—it is always there as tribes meet and clans gather for war. It was certain beyond certainty now that America was off on a ride which would end—was it God or the Devil knew where.

But the ride did not begin for another seven hours and seven nominations. Knowland seconded Goldwater's nomination; and Clare Boothe Luce, Charlie Halleck, Senator Tower. Then Keating nominated Rockefeller, a twenty-two-minute demonstration, decent in size but predictably hollow. More seconding speeches. Next came Scranton's turn. Dr. Milton Eisenhower, Ike's younger brother, did the nominating. It was good, it was clear, but there was not much excitement any more. One knew

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why the older Eisenhower had wanted the younger Eisenhower to be President. One also knew why he had not come very near—he gave a hint of Woodrow Wilson. Then the demonstration for Scranton. It was respectable, it let loose a half hour of music, it had fervor, the Scranton supporters died pure, an enjoyable demonstration. But the music was softer. Instead of *Viva-Olé* and the bugle blasts and rallying cries of the crusaders, one now heard *Boys and Girls Together*, or *Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here*. And the Scranton posters did not have the deep yellow and deep orange of the phalanxes who had jammed the gorge for Goldwater; no, they bore blue and red letters on white, or even black on white, a gray photograph of Scranton on a white background with letters in black—the sign had been designed by Brooks Brothers, you may bet. Even some of the lapel buttons for Scranton revealed a camp of understatement, since they were five inches in diameter, yet Scranton's name was in letters one-eighth of an inch high. It made one think of *The New Yorker* and the blank ordered harmoniums of her aisles and text.

Now went the nominations hour after hour like the time between four in the morning and breakfast at a marathon dance. Here came the nominating speeches and the pumped-up state demonstrations on the floor which spoke of plump elderly tourists doing the hula in Hawaii. Then would come a team of seconding speeches, the weepers and the wringers, the proud of nose and the knotty of nose, the kickers and the thumpers, the ministerial bores and the rabbinical drones, the self-satisfied, the glad-to-be-there, the self-anointed, the unctuous, the tooth suckers, the quaverers.

Fong was nominated, and Margaret Chase Smith, first woman ever to be nominated for President. Now she had a lock on the footnotes in the history books. Romney was nominated, and Judd, defeated Congressman Walter H. Judd of Minnesota, given a grand-old-man-of-the-party nominating speech. The band played *Glory, Glory, Hallelujah*. Just after World War II, early in 1946, Judd had been one of the first to talk of war with Russia. Last came Lodge who scratched himself. The nominations were done. The balloting could begin. They cleared the floor of the Press.

We had been there off and on for seven hours, circling the delegations, talking where we could, a secondary sea of locusts. All through the seven hours of this afternoon and evening, there was the California delegation. They could not be ignored. They sat in the front rows off the center aisle just beneath the speaker on the podium. They wore yellow luminescent Goldwater shirts, the sort of sleeveless high-colored shirts which highway workers wear to be phosphorescent at night. On the floor there were a thousand sights and fifty conversations those seven hours, but there was nothing like the California delegation. In California Rockefeller had lost

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to Goldwater by less than three percent of the vote, and, losing, had lost all the delegates. California had eighty-six delegates—all eighty-six by the rules of the victory were for Goldwater. So there were eighty-six yellow shirts right down front. Winning California, the Right had also won the plums of the convention, the distribution of tickets in the gallery, central placement on the floor, the allegiance of the Cow Palace cops. They had won the right to have their eighty-six faces at the center of the convention.

Most of the California delegation looked like fat state troopers or prison guards or well-established ranchers. A few were thin and looked like Robert Mitchum playing the mad reverend in *Night of the Hunter*. One or two were skinny as Okies, and looked like the kind of skinny wild-eyed gas-station attendant who works in a small town, and gets his picture in the paper because he has just committed murder with a jack handle. Yes, the skinny men in the California delegation leered out wildly. They looked like they were sitting on a body—the corpse of Jew Eastern Negritudes—and when the show was over, they were gonna eat it. That was it—half the faces in the California delegation looked like geeks. They had had it and now they were ready to put fire to the big tent.

There was one man who stood out as their leader—he had the face to be a leader of such men. Of course he looked not at all like a robber baron, the pride of Pinkerton, and a political boss all in one, no, nor was he in the least like an amalgam of Wallace Beery and fat Hermann Goering, no he was just Bill Knowland, ex-Senator William F. Knowland, Lord of the China Lobby, and honcho number one for Barry in Northern and Southern Cal.

So began the balloting. In twenty minutes there was another demonstration. The California standard, a white silk flag with a beast, some mongrel of bear and wild boar, danced in the air as if carried by a knight on a horse. The chairman for South Carolina intoned, "We are humbly grateful that we can do this for America. South Carolina casts sixteen votes for Senator Barry Goldwater." Barry was in. Four years of work was over. Final score: 883 for Goldwater. Scranton, 214. Rockefeller had 114, Romney 41. Smith received 27, Judd 22, Lodge 2, and Fong had 5.

When the voting was done, when the deliriums were down, an ooh of pleasure came up from the crowd, like the ooh for an acrobat. For Scranton accompanied by his wife was walking down the ramp to the podium, down the high ramp which led from the end-arena exits to the speaker's stand. It was a walk of a hundred feet or more, and Scranton came down this ramp with a slow measured deferential step, like a boy carrying a ceremonial bowl.

He made a clear speech in a young rather vibrant voice. He was doing the thing he was best at. He was making a gesture his elders would ap-

prove. He called on Republicans "not to desert our party but to strengthen it."

They cheered him modestly and many may have thought of his comments about Goldwater. On different days through June and July he had said: "dangerously impulsive," "spreading havoc across the national landscape," "a cruel misunderstanding of how the American economy works," "injurious to innumerable candidates," "chaos and uproar," "talking off the top of his head." "Hypocrisy . . ." says our friend Burke, "delights in the most sublime speculations; for never intending to go beyond speculation, it costs nothing to have it magnificent." "I ask . . ." Scranton said. He asked his delegates to make Goldwater's nomination unanimous.

Anywhere but in politics the speed with which the position had been shifted would be sign of a monumental instability. But politics was the place where finally nobody meant what they said—it was a world of nightmare; psychopaths roved. The profound and searing conflicts of politicians were like the quarrels between the girls in a brothel—they would tear each other's hair one night, do a trick together the next. They had no memory. They had no principles but for one—you do not quit the house. You may kill each other but you do not quit the house.

One could imagine the end of an imaginary nightmare: some time in the future, the Iron Ham (for such had become the fond nickname attached to President Barry Goldwater) would be told, thinking back on it all, that Billy-boy Scranton should be removed for some of the things he had said, and old Eisenhower, our General Emeritus, would find it in himself to say at a press conference on TV that while removal could not in itself be condoned, that is for high political figures, still it was bad, of course, policy, for people to have gotten away with insulting the President even if it was in the past and in the guise of free speech which as we all know can be abused. They would shave Scranton's head. Like a monk would he take the walk. And Old Ike would walk with him, and tell Willy S. a joke at the end, and have his picture taken shaking hands. Then, back to the White House for a two-shot drinking beer with Barry, the Iron Ham. After it was over, Barry would go back to the people who had put the ring in his nose.

. . . They should not think it amongst their rights to cut off the entail, or commit waste on the inheritance, by destroying at their pleasure the whole original fabric of their society; hazarding to leave to those who come after them a ruin instead of a habitation.

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Goldwater: "There have been several suggestions made. I don't think we would use any of them. But defoliation of the forests by low-yield atomic weapons could well be done. When you remove the foliage, you remove the cover."

—New York Post, May 27, 1964

Driving away from the Cow Palace after the nomination, I could hear Goldwater on the car radio. He was celebrating. He was considerably more agreeable than Dick Nixon celebrating—no all-I-am-I-owe-to-my-mother-and-father-my-country-and-church; no, Goldwater was off instead on one of his mild rather tangy excursions, "I feel very humble," he said, and you could feel the itch in the long johns and the hair in the nose, a traveling salesman in an upper berth, belt of bourbon down the hatch—as Mrs. Goldwater entered the room, he cried out, "Hi, honey," and added just a touch mean and small-town, "You didn't cry very much tonight."

"No," said Mrs. Goldwater, "wait till tomorrow."

The questioning went back and forth. He was all voice and very little mind, you could tell he had once been so bright as to invent and market a novelty item called Antsy Pants, men's white shorts with red ants embroidered all over them. But he had a voice! It made up for the mind. Lyndon Johnson's hambone-grits-and-turnip-greens was going to play heavy to this; Goldwater on radio was sweet and manly, clean as Dad in the show of new shows, One Man's Dad. They asked him, *Senator, you said that you would not wage a personal campaign against the President.* Yes, said Goldwater. *Well, sir, said the interviewer now, today you called President Johnson the biggest faker in the U.S. Butters of ecstasy in the interviewer's mouth. It's going to be a hard-hitting campaign, I assume then?* "Oh," said Goldwater, "I think you'll find some brickbats flying around."

The dialogue went on: *Could you tick off just a few of the major issues you think will be in the campaign against the Democrats?* "I think," said Goldwater, "law and dis—the abuse of law and order in this country, the total disregard for it, the mounting crime rate is going to be another issue—at least I'm going to make it one, because I think the responsibility for this has to start someplace and it should start at the Federal level with the Federal courts enforcing the law."

"I noticed one tonight in the evening paper, for example—a young girl in New York who used a knife to attack a rapist is now getting the worst of the deal and the rapist is probably going to get the Congressional Medal of Honor and sent off scot-free," said Goldwater, neglecting to tell us that the girl had had her indictment dismissed, and the alleged rapist was already up on a charge of attempted rape. Goldwater now said in the sort

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of voice Daddy employs when he is ready to use the strap, "That kind of business has to stop in this country and, as the President, I'm going to do all I can to see that women can go out in the streets of this country without being scared stiff." Yes, he would. He was a Conservative and he was for States' Rights. It was just that he wasn't for *local* rights.

"By this wise prejudice we are taught to look with horror on those children of their country, who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parent in pieces, and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds, and wild incantations, they may regenerate the paternal constitution, and renovate their father's life."

—BURKE, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Next day was the last day of the convention. Bill Miller was nominated for Vice-President. He was not a very handsome man nor did his manner seem particularly agreeable, but then the thought obtruded itself that the President of the United States was now in a more dramatic statistical relation to violent death than a matador. So a candidate would not necessarily look for too appealing a Vice-President—it might encourage notions of succession in the mind of an assassin. One would look instead for deterrents. William Miller was a deterrent.

III

A little later on the last day, Nixon made the speech of introduction for Goldwater. In the months ahead, when the bull in Barry swelled too wild and he gave promise of talking again of Negro assailants getting Medals of Honor, they would send in Nixon to calm him down. The Eastern Establishment, hydra head, was not dead after all; they still had Nixon. He was the steer to soothe the bull. Poor Barry. He had tried to lose Nixon in Cleveland, he had said, "He's sounding more like Harold Stassen every day." Nixon however was as easy to lose as a plain wife without prospects is easy to divorce.

"My good friend and great Republican, Dick Nixon . . ." was how Goldwater began his historic acceptance speech. It had come after a rich demonstration of happiness from the delegates. A boxcar of small balloons was opened in the rafters as Goldwater came down the ramp with his wife, his sons, his daughters. The balloons tumbled in thousands to the floor where (fifty balloons being put out each second by lighted cigarettes) a sound like machine-gun fire popped its way through the

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cheers. Fourth of July was here once more. He looked good, did Goldwater. Looking up at him from a position just beneath the speaker's stand, not twenty feet away, it was undeniable that Barry looked as handsome as a man who had just won the five-hundred-mile race in Indianapolis, had gone home to dress, and was now attending a party in his honor. He was even, protect the mark, elegant.

Then he began his speech. Today, the voice for large public gatherings had dignity. It was not a great voice, as Churchill's voice was great; there were no majesties nor storms of complexity, no war of style between manner and the obligation to say truth; but it was a balanced manly voice which would get votes. His speech was good in its beginning.

Now my fellow Americans, the tide has been running against freedom. Our people have followed false prophets. . . . We must, and we shall, set the tide running again in the cause of freedom. . . . Every breath and every heartbeat has but a single resolve, and that is freedom. . . . Tonight there is violence in our streets, corruption in our highest offices, aimlessness among our youth, anxiety among our elderly . . . despair among the many who look beyond material success toward the inner meaning of their lives.

As the speech went on, the mind went out again on a calculation that this candidate could win. He was humbug—H. L. Hunt's idea of freedom would not be very close to the idea of freedom in the minds of the children who were for Barry, no, nor William Knowland's idea either, no, nor the Pinkertons, the hawkshaw *geist* of the F.B.I., nor the fourteenth and fifteenth floor. Goldwater was a demagogue—he permitted his supporters to sell a drink called Gold Water, twenty-five cents a can for orange concentrate and warm soda—let no one say it went down like piss—he was a demagogue. He was also sincere. That was the damnable difficulty. Half-Jew and blue-eyed—if you belonged in the breed, you knew it was manic-depressive for sure: a man who designed his own electronic flagpole to raise Old Glory at dawn, pull her down at dusk—he had an instinct for the heart of the disease—he knew how to bring balm to the mad, or at least to half the mad; Goldwater would have much to learn about Negroes. But one thing was certain: he could win. He would be breadwinner, husband and rogue to the underprivileged of the psyche, he would strike a spark in many dry souls for he offered release to frustrations deeper than politics. Therefore, he could beat Lyndon Johnson, he could beat him out of a variety of cause, out of natural flood or hurricane, in an epidemic of backlash, or by an epidemic of guilt—how many union workers fed to the nose with exhortations that Johnson was good for take-home pay might rise and say to themselves, "I've been happy with less." Indeed I knew Goldwater could win because something in me leaped

at the thought; a part of me, a devil, wished to take that choice. For if Goldwater were President, a new opposition would form, an underground—the time for secret armies might be near again. And when in sanity I thought, Lord, give us twenty more years of Lyndon Johnson, nausea rose in some cellar of the throat, my stomach was not strong enough to bear such security; and if true for me, true for others, true perhaps for half or more of a nation's vote. Yet what of totalitarianism? What of war? But what of war? And the answer came back that one might be better a little nearer to death than the soul dying each night in the plastic encirclements of the new architecture and the new city, yes better, if death had dimension and one could know the face of the enemy and leave a curse. What blessing to know the face of the enemy by the end of the second third of the twentieth century.

And what of the Negro if Goldwater won? What of all the small-town Southern sheriffs who wished to wipe their hands in the black man's hair? And a fury, a white fury, burst out of the mind and said, "No white sheriff is necessarily so very much worse than the worst Negro," no, the mad light of the black hoodlum might be getting equal geek to geek to the worst of the California delegation. Then came a memory of James Baldwin and Diana Sands on a show called *Night Line* where television viewers could make a telephone call to the guests. Baldwin had received a call from a liberal which went, "I'd like to help, and I'm asking you how." "Don't ask me, baby," said Baldwin, "ask yourself." "You don't understand," said the liberal, "I know something about these matters, but it's getting confusing for me. I'm asking you in all sincerity where you think my help could be best offered." "Well, baby," said Baldwin, "that's *your* problem." And Diana Sands, pinky extended in total delicate black-lady disgust, put the receiver back in the cradle. "You see," said Baldwin, talking to Les Crane, the master of ceremonies, "I remember what an old Negro woman told me once down South. She said, 'What the white man will someday learn is that there is no remission of sin.' That I never forgot," said Jimmy, "because you see it's perfectly possible the white will not be forgiven, not for a single cut or whipping or lynch mob or rape of a black woman," his voice now as soft and reminiscent of the wind as some African man of witchcraft. And I had to throttle an impulse to pick up the phone and call Baldwin, and say, "You get *this*, baby. There's a shit storm coming like nothing you ever knew. So ask yourself if what you desire is for the white to kill every black so that there be total remission of guilt in your black soul." And the mind went out still again.

The country was in disease, it was conceivably so ill that a butcher could operate with dirty hands and have magic sufficient to do less harm than the hospital with its wonder drugs and the new pestilence. (As the oil

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goes out, the earth turns cold, an arid used-up space, a ground for jumping off Texas to the used-up pits of the moon.) Still, you could not keep Americans from madness; our poetry was there, our symbolic logic: $AuH_2O + GOP + 64 = \text{Victory!}$ color of orange juice, Go, Go, Goldwater. Mrs. Goldwater's maiden name was Johnson, a portent of triumph to Barry? *Viva-Olé*. Eager to slay.

The country was in disease. It had been in disease for a long time. There was nothing in our growth which was organic. We had never solved our depression, we had merely gone to war, and going to war had never won it, not in our own minds, not as men, no, we had won it but as mothers, sources of supply; we did not know that we were equal to the Russians. We had won a war but we had not really won it, not in the secret of our sleep. So we had not really had a prosperity, we had had fever. *Viva-Olé*. We had grown rich because of one fact with two opposite interpretations: there had been a cold war. It was a cold war which had come because Communism was indeed a real threat to freedom, or it had come because capitalism would never survive without an economy geared to war; or was it both—who could know? who could really know? The center of our motive was the riddle wrapped in the enigma—was the country extraordinary or accursed? No, we had not even found our Communist threat. We had had a secret police organization and an invisible government large enough by now to occupy the moon, we had hunted Communists from the top of the Time-Life Building to the bottom of the Collier mine; we had not found that many, not that many, and had looked like Keystone cops. We had even had a Negro Revolution in which we did not believe. We had had it, yes we had had it, because (in the penury of our motive) we could not afford to lose votes in Africa and India, South America and Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, name any impoverished place: we were running in a world election against the collective image of the Russ, and so we had to give the black man his civil rights or Africa was so much nearer to Marx. But there had not been much like love in the civil rights. Just Dirksen. So we were never too authentic. No.

We had had a hero. He was a young good-looking man with a beautiful wife, and he had won the biggest poker game we ever played, the only real one—we had lived for a week ready to die in a nuclear war. Whether we liked it or not. But he had won. It was our one true victory in all these years, our moment; so the young man began to inspire a subtle kind of love. His strength had proved stronger than we knew. Suddenly he was dead, and we were in grief. But then came a trial which was worse. For the assassin, or the man who had been arrested but was not the assassin—we would never know, not really—was killed before our sight. In the

going mad. It took more to make a nation go mad than any separate man, but we had taken miles too much. Certainties had shattered. Now the voice of our national nerves (our arts, our events) was in a new state. Morality had wed itself to surrealism, there were cockroaches in all the purple transistors, we were distractable. We had an art of the absurd; we had moral surrealism. Our best art was *Dr. Strangelove* and *Naked Lunch*, *Catch-22*; *Candy* was our heroine; Jack Ruby our aging juvenile; Andy Warhol, Rembrandt; our national love was a corpse in Arlington; and heavyweight champion turned out to be Cassius Clay; New York was the World's Fair plus the Harlem bomb—it would take a genius to explain they were the same—and Jimmy Baldwin said, "That's *your* problem," on the Les Crane show at one a.m. Even the reverends were salty as the sea.

Yes, our country was fearful, half mad, inauthentic. It needed a purge. It had a liberal Establishment obeisant to committees, foundations, and science—the liberal did not understand that the center of science was as nihilistic as a psychopath's sense of God. We were a liberal Establishment, a prosperous land—we had a Roman consul among us—the much underrated and much disliked Lyndon Johnson was become a power in the land and doubtless a power upon the land; civilization had found its newest helmsman in the restraints, wisdom, and corruption of a major politician, of an organization boss to whom all Mafias, legit and illegit, all syndicates, unions, guilds, corporations and institutions, cadres of conspiracy and agents for health, Medicare, welfare, the preservation of antibiotics, and the proliferation of the Pentagon could bend their knee. The Establishment (the Democratic Establishment and the reeling columns of the Republican Establishment, falling back upon the center in the thundering confusion of Barry Goldwater's breakthrough) had a new leader, a mighty Caesar had arisen, Lyndon Johnson was his name, all hail, Caesar. Caesar gave promise to unify the land. But at what a cost. For if the ideology were liberal, the methodology was total—to this political church would come Adlai Stevenson and Frank Sinatra, the President of U.S. Steel and the President of the Steel Worker's Union, there would be photographs of Johnson forty feet high in Atlantic City—Big Bubber Lyndon—and parties in which minority groups in native costume would have their folk dance: could one see the ghost of Joe Stalin smiling on his pipe?

Yes, if we all worked to beat Barry, and got behind Lyndon and pushed, radicals and moderate Republicans, Negroes and Southern liberals, college professors and Cosa Nostra, café society and Beatniks-for-Johnson, were we all then going down a liberal superhighway into the deepest swamp of them all? For Johnson was intelligent enough to run a total land,

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he had vast competence, no vision, and the heart to hold huge power, he had the vanity of a Renaissance prince or a modern dictator, whereas Barry might secretly be happier with his own show daily on radio. If Goldwater were elected, he could not control the country without moving to the center; moving to the center he would lose a part of the Right, satisfy no one, and be obliged to drift still further Left, or moving back to the Right would open schisms across the land which could not be closed. Goldwater elected, America would stand revealed, its latent treacheries would pop forth like boils; Johnson elected, the drift would go on, the San Francisco Hiltons would deploy among us. Under Goldwater, the odds were certainly greater that nuclear war would come, but under Johnson we could move from the threat of total war to war itself with nothing to prevent it; the anti-Goldwater forces which might keep the country too divided to go to war would now be contained within Johnson. Goldwater promised to lead the nation across the edge of a precipice, Johnson would walk us through the woods, perchance to quicksand itself. Goldwater would open us to the perils of our madness, Johnson would continue our trip into the plague. Goldwater could accelerate the Negro Revolution to violence and disaster—Johnson might yet be obliged to betray it from within. And what a job could be done! Who in such a pass should receive the blessing of a vote—the man who inspired the deepest fear, or the man who encouraged us to live in a lard of guilt cold as the most mediocre of our satisfied needs?

Still, the more Goldwater talked, the less impressive became his voice. When he went on too long, his voice grew barren. One could never vote for him, one could not vote for a man who made a career by crying Communist—that was too easy: half the pigs, bullies, and cowards of the twentieth century had made their fortune on that fear. I had a moment of rage at the swindle. I was tired of hearing about Barry Goldwater's high fine courage. Yesterday, on the floor, talking to a young delegate from Indiana, I had said, "Did it ever occur to you that Fidel Castro might have more courage than Barry Goldwater?"

"Yes, but Castro is a criminal mentality," said the boy.

I had cut off the argument. I was too close to losing my temper. Would the best of the young in every hick town, washed by the brainwater of the high school and the Legion, come to join this conservative crusade because Goldwater made an appeal to freedom, to courage, to change? What a swindle was in the making, what an extinction of the best in Conservative thought. They were so righteous, these Republicans. Goldwater might end with more warfare, security, and statism than any Democrat had ever dared; as a conservative, he would fail altogether (doubt-

less!) but certain he was to do one thing: he would march into Cuba. That was too much. One could live with a country which was mad, one could even come to love her (for there was agony beneath the madness), but you could not share your life with a nation which was powerful, a coward, and righteously pleased because a foe one-hundredth our size had been destroyed. So one got up to leave at this—we would certainly be strong enough to march into Cuba.

Then Goldwater uttered his most historic words: "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. . . . Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue," and I sat down and took out my notebook and wrote in his words, since I did not know how famous they would become. And thought: Dad, you're too much. You're really too much. You're too hip, baby. I have spent my life seeking to get four-letter words into U.S. magazines, and now you are ready to help me.

And as I left the arena, there was a fire engine and the cry of a siren and the police with a gaunt grim look for the end of the week. There had been a fire burning, some small fire.

On the way out, outside the Cow Palace, a wet fog was drifting, and out beyond the exits, demonstrators from CORE were making a march. They had been out there every day of the convention: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday now, each day had demonstrated, carrying their placards, marching in a circle two abreast, singing *We Shall Overcome*, shouting, "Goldwater Must Go," marching round and round like early Christians in the corrals waiting to be sent to the arena, while about them, five, six, ten deep, was a crowd of the Republican curious, some with troubled faces, some with faces troubled by no more than appetite, hounds staring at the meat, these white girls and Negro boys walking side by side, the girls pale, no lipstick, nunlike, disdainful, wearing denim shirts and dungarees; the Negroes tall and sometimes handsome, not without dignity, bearded almost all, the wild Negro girl in the center screaming savage taunts at the watching crowd, rude as Cassius Clay with a high-yaller mouth, and the crowd dreaming of an arena where lions could be set on these cohabiting blacks and whites, and the blacks and whites in the marching circle with their disdainful faces. Yes, kill us, says the expression on the face of the nunlike girl with no lipstick, you will kill us but you will never digest us: I despise you all. And some of the old Wasps are troubled in their Christian heart, for the girl is one of theirs, no fat plain Jewess with a poor nose is this one, she is part of the West, and so their sense of crisis opens and they know like me that America has come to a point from which she will never return. The wars are coming and the deep revolutions of the soul.

Carol C
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MY HOPE FOR AMERICA: A Review of a Book by

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Lyndon B. Johnson

In 20 years it may be taken for granted that 1964 was the year in which a major party nominated a major pretender to conservatism. It was a loss, and it was conceivably a horror, for 1964 was also a year in which a real conservative still had a great deal to say to the nation. He could have demonstrated with no vast difficulty that America was under the yoke of a monstrous building boom whose architecture gave promise of being the ugliest in the history of man, that our labor unions had watered the value of labor until physical work had become as parasitical as white-collar work, and that our medicine had been overburdened beyond repair by a proliferation of wonder drugs whose side effects (with the notable exception of thalidomide) were still largely unknown—hence a delayed mass poisoning might yet be the fruit of this research. Our fruits, our vegetables, our cattle, had lost the opportunity to feed on native soil and organic food; the balance of nature, the fisheries, the economy of marine life, and the insect economies were being disrupted to the root by marinas and insecticides; our old neighborhoods and old homes were being—one could swear it—systematically demolished, and our educational system was glutted by a host of intellectual canapés: art appreciation, domestic economy, sexual efficiency, the modern novel, and so forth.

A real conservative could also have pointed out that the Civil Rights Act, no matter how imperfect and conceivably unconstitutional, was an act to be voted for, since finally there was a matter more important than the protection of property rights—it was spiritual rights: the Negro was entitled to his spiritual rights even if there were hard niggling costs to the rights of the Constitution. Finally, a great conservative could have noted that the health of Communism was its misery, that like all top-heavy structures its greatest danger was in its growth. Prosperity was Communism's poison, but attack from capitalism was its transfusion of blood. So the time was open for a great debate. Should we go back to isolationism? Did we not already possess enough nuclear Doomsdays to protect ourselves, was it not perhaps time to recognize that the industrialization of the backward nations was a thankless venture which wise men would avoid? Might it not be best to let the Communists have Asia and Africa after all? Would they not strangle on the meal? Yes, America was

perhaps ready to listen to the sophistications of a conservative, if such a man was there to appear in 1964.

But what a conservative came down the pikel Marooned in a hopeless traffic with hate groups and bigots, Southern bullies and oil pirates, offering a program of sinister hints that a Federal police force would protect the young ladies of our land on their walk through our streets at night; reasoning with all the homely assurance of a filthy sock that he would protect the past by destroying the present (as in those remarks about scorching the foliage in Vietnam in order to keep the guerrillas from concealing themselves); wasting the substance of his campaign in pointless technical arguments with the Pentagon; and boring reconciliations and new feuds with the stricken Moderates of his party—the alleged conservative candidate was perhaps no more than a demagogue of the Right with a manly Christian air, a sweet voice, eyeglasses, and total innocence of a sense of contradiction, a spirit so naturally conservative that on the grounds of his home he raised the American flag with an electronic flagpole. Up at dawn, down at dusk, commanded the photoelectric cells in the mast. Well, one couldn't vote for such a man. He pressed the wrong buttons.

The mandate would go therefore to Lyndon Johnson. So most of America had seemed to decide by the eve of election. But it was nonetheless a vote heavy with gloom, and stricken with a sense of possible bad consequence, for there was much about Johnson which appealed not at all, and some of the evidence was intimate. He had written a book. That is intimate evidence. *My Hope for America*, he had called it. Now, of course, a book written by a high official must not be judged by average standards, or one would be forced to say, for example, that Jack Kennedy was not a very good writer and that Bobby Kennedy, at last reading, wrote a dead stick's prose—his style almost as bad as J. Edgar Hoover's. But even at its worst, the prose style of Jack Kennedy (and his ghost writers) is to the prose style of L.B.J. (and *his* ghost writers) as de Tocqueville is to Ayn Rand. It is even not impossible that *My Hope for America* is the worst book ever written by any political leader anywhere.

The private personality of L.B.J., as reported by the authority of the best gossip, is different from his public presence. He is, one is told, not too unlike Broderick Crawford in *All the King's Men*, roaring, smarting, bellowing, stabbing fingers on advisers' chests, hugging his daughters, enjoying his food, mean and unforgiving, vindictive, generous, ebullient, vain, suddenly depressed, then roguish, then overbearing, suddenly modest again only to bellow once more. It is somewhat like the description of an early Renaissance prince, and if one looks hard at the photograph of the President on the cover of *My Hope for America*, a leader of *condottieri* stands forth—hard, greedy, exceptionally intelligent eyes whose

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cynicism is spiked by a fierce pride, big fleshy inquisitive (and acquisitive) nose, thin curved mouth (a boss mouth) and a slab of round hard jaw, deep dimple on the upper lip, deep dimple on the chin. It is not a bad face altogether, it is sufficiently worldly to inspire a kind of confidence that while no age of high ideals is close at hand, yet no martyrs are to be tortured, for there is small profit in that.

It is a face and a concealed personality which could even, considering the Republican alternative, inspire a touch of happiness, if it were not for the public image—that boundless sea of overweening piety which collects here in this slim volume, this cove of Presidential prose whose waters are so brackish that a spoonful is enough to sicken the mind for hours. *My Hope for America* is an abominable, damnable book, and what makes it doubly awful is that nearly all of its ideas are blessed. It is in fact difficult to disagree with almost any one of them.

Who can argue on the side of poverty, or against justice, or against the idea of a Great Society? Let Barry Goldwater argue, not I. No, the ideals in this book are double-barreled, double-ringed, a double end of the cornucopia. More for the poor, more for the rich; more for peace, more for war; dedicatedly opposed to Communism, cautiously conciliatory; out to raise the income of poor nations, out to squash the economy of Cuba; all out for the Negro, all violence to be checked in city streets; all for the Democratic party, all for a party which includes Democrats *and* Republicans. There is even, and it is the achievement of this book, a curious sense of happiness running through its paragraphs. It is that happiness which is found at the end of the vision. It is as if the dream of Rousseau and Condorcet and Bakunin and Herzen and Marx and Lenin and Trotsky and John Dewey and the Webbs and Keynes and Roosevelt, Dreiser, and Darrow—name any of a hundred, any of that long stream of political engineers who dreamed of changing a material world by material means to make all men free and equal—had come down at the end to Little Ol' Lyndon, and hot damn, he had said, discovering Progressive religion in 1964, that's the ticket, that's the liver-eating ticket! And he was off to bring it off. And happy as a clam. That's the happiness which comes off this book. It is like a dream of heaven in a terminal ward.

For beneath this odd disembodied happiness is a prose more sinister than the most pious of Lyndon Johnson's misrepresentations of his own personality; it is a prose ~~which~~ ^{that} stirs half-heard cries of the death by suffocation of Western Civilization, it is a prose almost so bad and so deadening as the Georgian catechisms Josef Stalin used to hammer out: "Why is the Communist Party the party of the Soviet people? The Communist Party is the party of the Soviet people because . . ." It was enough at the time, reading Stalin, to keep from becoming a Communist.

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Now, reading Lyndon!—the horror is that one must still vote for him. But what a book is *My Hope for America*.

Examine it: 127 pages, a little more than 200 words to a page, most of the pages half pages or blank pages so that in bulk there are 17,000 words collected in 13 short chapters; they have titles like this—*President of All the People, A President's Faith and Vision, Building the Atlantic Partnership, This Developing World, Creative Federalism*. Each page of each chapter is divided into paragraphs. Page 8 has 12 paragraphs; the average page has four or five with a generous space between each paragraph. This is not because the remarks have the resonant echo of Pascal's *Pensées*, rather—one idea does not lead to another. So the space must be there. It is useful for burying whichever infinitesimal part of the brain died in the gas of the preceding phrase.

Yet every altruistic idea and every well-tuned moderation which Lyndon Johnson's political experience has put together over the years is somehow worked into the organum of his credo. It is impossible to disagree with a single of its humanistic desires ("We know that we can learn from the culture, the arts, and the traditions of other countries"); it is equally impossible to feel the least pleasure at the thought these goods may yet come to be—just so bad and disheartening is the style of this book:

Reality rarely matches dream. But only dreams give nobility to purpose. This is the star I hope to follow—which I know most of you have seen, and which I first glimpsed many years ago in the Texas night.

When the helpless call for help—the hearing must hear, the seeing must see, and the able must act.

It is an America where every man has an equal chance for the well-being that is essential to the enjoyment of the freedom that we brag about.

The Gulf of Tonkin may be distant Asian waters, but none can be detached about what happened there.

High-school students will be writing essays on these paragraphs. One's stomach turns over. It is certain that if Barry Goldwater had written the same book, everyone would be agreed his style was a menace. Still, what is quoted up to here is still English, English more or less. It is in the depth of the real prose articulated by Johnson and his corps of ghost writers that the heart of the darkness resides. For Johnson is not a writer and has no wish to be. He is a communications engineer. He uses words in interlocking aggregates which fence in thoughts like cattle. At bottom,

the style consists of nothing but connectives and aggregate words—that is, political phrases five words long which are one aggregate word and so should be hyphenated. Example:

And it is one-of-the-great-tasks-of-Presidential-leadership to make our people aware that they share-a-fundamental-unity-of-interest-and-purpose-and-belief.

The essence of totalitarian prose is that it does not define, it does not deliver. It oppresses. It obstructs from above. It is profoundly contemptuous of the minds who will receive the message. So it does its best to dull this consciousness with sentences which are nothing but bricked-in power structures. Or alternately a totalitarian prose slobbers upon an audience a sentimentality so debauched that admiration for shamelessness is inspired. But then, sentimentality is the emotional promiscuity of those who have no sentiment:

When I was a child, one of my first memories was hearing the powder go off on an anvil on Armistice Day. I remember the terror that flowed from the Lusitania. I remember seeing boys come marching home, and the welcome we gave them at our little schoolhouse. When Pearl Harbor was attacked . . .

There is one expanding horror in American life. It is that our long odyssey toward liberty, democracy and freedom-for-all may be achieved in such a way that utopia remains forever closed, and we live in freedom and hell, debased of style, not individual from one another, void of courage, our fear rationalized away. We will all have enough money and we will all have a vote. The money will buy appliances made of plastic, and the money will buy books just as bad as *My Hope for America* or *The Conscience of a Conservative*.

The dream of democracy—that the average man possesses riches within himself worthy of a lord—will evolve into some anomalous electronic shape of human, half genius, half lout, and the liberation of existence will not take place. Only the buildings will continue to be built—bigger housing for all, slum clearance, urban renewal, Edward Durrell Stone, until we will look as if indeed we lost a war, as if we had been bombed to the ground, and built ourselves up again just so quickly and cheaply as the barracks could be slapped together.

"In the next forty years," writes Johnson, "we must rebuild the entire urban United States." But who will do it? Whose vision will prevail? Which head of horror may condemn generations not yet born to look at faceless buildings and roofless roofs, the totalitarianism stealing in from without, from the formless forms and imprisoned air of a new society