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In adolescence, I had only to say "God," and I would think of my groin. God was lust to me, God was very much like the image of the Devil offered to us by my good school, St. Matthew's. Chapel was daily and devoted to Christ, but once a week on average we might hear of the temptings of a somewhat legendary master-ghost named Satan. Chapel kept God and Satan well-separated, but I, unlike other Matties, kept mixing them up. I had my reasons: I was introduced to carnal relations

during my first year in the school by an assistant chaplain of St. Matthew's who glommed--I choose the word to convey the sensation of that rubbery indefatigable seal--my fourteen-year-old penis in his tight, unhappy lips.

We were in Washington, D.C. on a school trip. Maybe that is one more reason I dislike our subtle oppressive capital, that broad well-paved swamp. Boredom and bad memory are at the root of every oppression, I would suppose, and that night I was sharing a double bed with the assistant chaplain in an inexpensive hotel not far from H Street, NW, and was unable to sleep, and feeling full of apprehension about the time that the chaplain came out of a mill-race of stentorian snoring, murmured his wife's name several times, "Bettina, Bettina," and proceeded to embrace my hips and strip my bewildered young privates of their primeval dew. I remember lying there with a complete sense of the sixteen other members of my class who were also on the trip and in the hotel. I visualized them two by two, and four by four, in all the other six bedrooms where they had been placed. On this annual trip to Washington, the assistant chaplain was our guide, and since I had not succeeded in my first year at the school in being associated in anyone's mind with anyone else, and thereby was marked as a loner, the

assistant chaplain, a sympathetic fellow, had assigned me to his room.

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

disgusting," they'd say, and he'd whine back, "Aaah, shut up. You're doing it too."

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

I would, as I say, merely watch. I was not up for studies in comparative phallitude. I was electrified by them, but even at fourteen, I had acquired the near-legendary Hubbard family insulation. I didn't show a spark.

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

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

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

How the poor man was hung between his lust for one good reciprocal suck on his charged-up end, and the horror of knowing that he was inching out along the precipice of his career. When I remained still and did not move at all, his sobbing finally ceased and he lay still as well. I did my best to picture him officiating at a high mass in school chapel, white silk surplice

over white linen cassock, those ritual gestures a talisman I could employ against him. It may have been a real magic. After an interval of silence, equal in weight to the darkness of our hotel room, he gave a sigh, slipped out of bed, and spent the rest of the night on the floor.

That was the extent of my homosexual experience, but what a bend it put into the shape of my psyche. I stayed away from sex as though it were a disease. I had bog-and-marsh dreams where I was Arnold and the chaplain released streams of the foulest suppurations over me. In turn, I would awaken to feel infected. My sheets were wet, sprayed with nothing less than the pus, I was certain, of my unholy infections. The headaches grew worse. When the boys grew ready to kid-around, I took off for the library. I believe I finally accepted my father's desire to have an operation on my head because I could not overcome that part of me which was certain there was awful matter in the brain to be cut out.

Conceivably, something was altered. When I went back to St. Matthew's in the fall of 1949 after my summer of convalescence, I was sixteen, and in my mind's eye, felt left with one lobe larger than the other. The school, however, seemed at last a reasonable place. Its soccer (it was the first

improved with the years. The odds are favorable if you can hold your liquor.

Hugh Tremont Montague intervened. My father, who always kept his promises, if late by many a season, finally arranged for the meeting a year and a half after our lunch at Twenty-One. My operation had come and gone, as well as my convalescence. I was no longer in my first of three years at St. Matthew's, but a Senior on the summer before his last two semesters, and a responsible figure to my younger cousins and brothers in the summer frolics at Doane, curious frolics--the eight hundred yard swimming race around the island, four hundred with the current, four hundred back in the channel against it, and the all-day hike which commenced at The Precipices south of Bar Harbor at eight in the morning, went over Cadillac Mountain to Jordan Pond at noon, then up to Sargent Mountain and down all the way to Somesville; next, Acadia Mountain descending to Man of War Creek: We ended at the dock in Manset by eight in the evening. There a lobster boat came to meet us for the trip by water around the Western Way, up to Blue Hill Bay and Doane. A platoon of Marines would have complained of a twenty-mile march over hills like that, but we were rewarded by explorations in the lobster boat over the next few days to islands scattered

around the Bay, islands so small their names were in dispute, and their topography eccentric--great grass meadows on one, guano-encrusted sea ledges on another, forests with unearthly trees warped by long-lost winds: we would feast on lobsters boiled over driftwood fires and clams baked in the coals--even the charred hot dogs tasted as good as wild game caught with bow and arrow. To this day, Kittredge and I are visited in summer by cousins who have shared these Hubbard frolics. No great tennis players ever came out of such a regimen, but our family life was our social life.

When Hugh Tremont Montague came up one weekend with my father in a chartered light plane from Boston, it was, therefore, an event of the first measure. We had a much spoken-of visitor. I might have heard of my anointed godfather for the first time during lunch at Twenty-One, but his name seemed present everywhere thereafter, at least at school. A new file in my personal history had been duly opened. He was, as I now discovered, one of the myths of St. Matthew's. All through my first year at school, teachers must have spoken of him, but--being a stubborn adolescent--the name never entered my ear. Once my father inscribed his importance on my heart, however, accounts of him popped up everywhere. It is possible that Hugh

Many Christians
(Episcopalians &
Catholics) would
say Many was
the one with
this tenderness

Hugh--known then as Mr. Montague--had given the clue: Christ was Love, but Love lived only in the Truth.

That is an extraordinary addition to the Beatitudes if we come to recognize--as I have--that Christ has a special tenderness for drunks and liars. Christ, however, was Truth to Mr. Montague, and on the consequence, one's ability to recognize the presence of Grace (which I always saw as a leavening in the region of the chest) could be injured by a lie.

Harlot left precepts at St. Matthew's. God the Father--awesome, monumental Jehovah--was the principle of Justice. All agreed that God, the Father, was Justice. Mr. Montague added that God, the Father, was also the embodiment of Courage. Just as Love was Truth and there could be no compassion without honesty, so was Justice equal to Courage. There was no justice for the coward. There was only the purgatory of his daily life. Did a student feel despair? Look to the root. A cowardly act had been committed, or a lie told. Somewhere in the school pamphlets sent out to increase St. Matthew's endowment, there are a few lines quoted from an address Hugh Montague gave on a special occasion to a senior class in chapel. "The purpose of this school," he said, "is not to send you away as brilliant men--although some of you do

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

Rock climbing, after all, was the objective correlative of Virtue, which is to say, the meeting of Truth and Courage. I was soon to find out. That night, in the summer of 1949 when Hugh Montague came to The Keep for the first time, he was thirty-five and I was seventeen. He looked forty-five to me, and much as I expected, half a British officer (for his erect posture and his mustache), half an Anglican clergyman, by his wire-rimmed eyeglasses and high forehead. Let me say that he continued to look this same age of forty-five for the next twenty-odd years, right up to his dreadful fall, but back then, he was a good deal less charming. A host of compressed energies were balefully held--or, rather, balefully in-held. One talked to him with no sense of ease: I knew immediately why Christ,

for Mr. Montague, was Truth, not Love. "Heaven help me," was my first thought as we shook hands; he had a grip to remind you of the hard rubber pads that are put on vise-jaws to keep them from injuring any object in their grasp. "Heaven help me," went my thought, "this man is a real prick."

I had no notion how accurate was my instinct! Decades later, over the seasons of my marriage to Kittredge, presented bit by bit, I learned the innermost secrets of Harlot's young manhood even as he had confessed them one by one to her; what other gift could measure his profound love for Kittredge? He had indeed been a prick, and of the worst sort. His personal devil had been a great desire to ream young pits. There was hardly a good-looking young boy in his instruction whom he had not wanted to bugger. According to Kittredge, he never had: at least, not if he was telling the truth--which was always the question--but he avowed that until he met her, this impulse was the ongoing daily torment of his years at Harvard, then again back at St. Matthew's where he ground his teeth in sleep. Indeed, he had not entered the ministry for fear that he would, on one good day, dive deep into his impulses and betray his church. His sexual energies, in consequence, were in-held. As he took my hand on introduction and stared into my eyes, he was

a force and I was a receptacle: He was clean as steel and I was a punk--I knew there had to be some bit of stink in the crack of my cheeks.

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

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

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

"I think so."

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

I named them.

"Your favorite?"

"English," I said.

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

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

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

"Yessir," I said. I was such a liar. I had gotten an A for my paper on Portrait of a Lady, but I had merely parroted a few critical appreciations. I certainly hadn't gone to bed happily with Henry James. The Young Lions was what I had enjoyed most last year. Noah Ackerman, the Jew, had appealed to me.

"Let's go out tomorrow," he said. "Your father wants me to take you on a climb. I hear there's dependable rock suitable

for beginners over at a place called Otter Cliffs. We'll pick a route that's feasible."

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

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

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

"Yessir."

"Your father asked me to be your godfather."

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

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

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

"I don't like close personal interest."

I nodded.

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

"Yessir." But I beamed. Absolutely unexpected to myself, I felt such happiness at this confirmation of my father's qualities that I knew the value, on the spot, of family pride. I was filled from head to toe with all the nourishment of my blood.

"Given pride like that in your father," he said, "you will be able to equal him."

"Never," I said. "But I'm going to try."

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

"I'm sorry to hear that."

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

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

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

the given. If the rock was slippery, we would still have a go. So I began to pray it would not rain.

It was misty at 6:30 in the morning, but I knew the weather in Mt. Desert well enough to see that the sky would be clear by eight. To avoid a family breakfast, we had fried eggs and coffee at a hash-house (no granola for outdoorsmen then!) and I ate my food in all somber duty, the yolk and biscuits going down like sulphur and brimstone, after which we took the Park Drive along the eastern shore of Mt. Desert. As we drove, I named for him places long familiar to me, the Beehive, Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, Gorham Mountain, a guide leading the way to his own terminal hour. Or, so I was convinced. Rock-climbing was familiar to me, if only in sleep. I always knew when a dream had become a nightmare for there was I clinging to a wall.

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

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

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

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

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

He was taking precautions. I will not try to describe all that he did, but I could see he was anchoring one end of the rappel rope not only to the tree, but to adjacent rocks by means of long slings of webbing. All of it converged through an oval chromium ring smaller than my palm, which I knew was called a carabiner.

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

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

I realized that old as he was, we were acting as if both of us were seventeen. Which made it worse. He was vastly superior.

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

I found it hard to believe that he was going to make a voyage up and down that cliff as casually as taking reconnaissance of a few floors on an elevator, but indeed, he gave one mighty yank on the anchor of his rappelling rope, and satisfied with such security, stood on the edge of the cliff, back to the sea, the rope wound once around his waist, and stated, "You'll find this the hardest part of the rappel. Just slack off some rope and consign your butt to the void. Then,

sit back on the rope." Which he did by placing the sole of his shoes on the lip and leaning backward, until his extended legs were in a horizontal line with the ground. "Now," he said, "just walk down step by step. Keep your legs stiff, your feet against the rock, and give yourself a little slack when you need it."

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

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

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

I did not say a word. I thought of every excuse I could make. I had had no sleep. My operation left me dizzy at

unexpected times. I would like to approach this more slowly: could we warm up on a trail that did not require ropes? Below, tolling loudly on the rocks, the surf reverberated among my fears.

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

To put one's heels on a ledge and lean backward into space, holding only to a rope, is equal to the wail one hears in

childhood on falling out of bed. One discovers the voice is one's own. My first few steps, feet pressed flat against the vertical rock, were as clumsy as if my legs were concrete posts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unattached to any rope, he started up. "Try to recall my route when you're here," he called down from fifteen feet above, "but don't fret if you lose it. Part of the fun is to come on your own finds." Whereupon he mounted the face in one continuous series of easy moves and was at the top before I became aware again that the rope attached to my waist was still

very much in place, and its other end was tied to some tree above the lip and out of sight. Mr. Montague appeared on the edge, some eighty agonizing feet above, sitting on the brink in all comfort, his feet dangling over, my rope, the rope, that is, with which he would belay me, wound casually and only once around his waist.

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

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

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

As I started up the wall, I could not believe how vertical was the ascent. I thought there might be some slant in my favor, but, no. Vertical. True, the rock was cracked and scarred and nubbled and pitted, a raw acne of surface that you could certainly get a grip on. Feeling a friendly knob of a

hold at the top of my reach, and seeing a small slot for my foot, I stepped in, reached up, pulled, and was now a foot off the ground. I knew the emotions of the first great day at Kitty Hawk. Yes, this was as good as the virgin jump from the balcony deck into Blue Hill Bay. To fortify me, I felt Mr. Montague's rope pull on my harness. "If you need a little help," he yelled down, "call for 'Tension,'" on which, by demonstration, he pulled harder so that I felt somewhat less than my own full weight and more inclined to climb. I found another grip and foothold just above, took the move, took another, and another, glanced down. I was eight feet above the ledge. Splendid! I found another knob and just above my knee was one of the buckets of which he spoke, a hole about as large as a pool table pocket into which I could rest my foot. There I halted, catching my breath. The rock felt alive. It had odors, grooves filled with dirt, overhanging elbows, armpits; it had pubic corners. I do not wish to exaggerate, but I was not prepared for the intimacy of the activity. It was as if I were climbing up the body of a giant put together of the bones and flesh and pieces and parts of a thousand humans.

Now, soon enough, I entered a more difficult portion of the ascent. About halfway up, I came to a place where I did not

know how to continue. There were no good grips to reach with my hands, and not a quarter inch of rock-wrinkle to support the next push with my foot. In deadlock, straddled, I encountered the agonizing indecision of the rock climber. All the while that one's limbs are burning from these frantic expenditures of anxiety, one does not know whether to try to continue up, or look to descend a few feet in order to veer onto another route. Frozen on the rock, my voice scorched in my throat, the open depths below were falling away into the unrecoverable past. I now stared like a pawnbroker at dubious jewels of possibility presented by each ripple in the rock. I think half of all I ever learned about rock climbing must have been absorbed in the first five minutes on Otter Cliffs. I had been introduced to the great social world of vertical stone. There, the smallest bit of irregularity can prove an immensely useful friend, a treacherous if conceivably employable associate, a closed door, or an outright enemy. I had managed to maneuver myself into a coffin's corner just below a small overhang.

There I rested, sobbing for breath, altogether bewildered what to do next. The more I squeezed myself into this perch, which accommodated only a part of my body, the more I had to consume the strength of my arms in unhappy holds. I heard

Montague call out, "Don't build your nest there. It's no place to breed."

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

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

Here I discovered the curious nature of one's own virtue. That is usually so inaccessible to us that we are usually doomed to know our separate vices more intimately. Even as I obeyed him and took my first step down in retreat, eyeing already the potentialities suggested to the right, I saw what might be a quicker way around the overhang if I tried a route to the left. It was riskier. One cannot always see the crucial details that lie above one's view (which is why the best of climbers sometimes mount with all their effort into a cul-de-sac.) Here, to the right, I had his word at least, whereas to the left, I could see one good move and then another, but there appeared to be some straddle ten feet above, some smooth rock face with two vertical cracks five feet apart--and perhaps a hold or two, I could not tell. What appears to be a hold from below can prove only the shadow of a bulge; what promises an edge for one's foot turns out to be no more than a striation in the stone. Six bona-fide inches of ledge on which a man could stand and rest was a gift. One becomes intimate with the rock. One lives on

it so long. What Montague had mounted in ninety or a hundred seconds was now screwing me into my tenth and fifteenth minute of fear-fraught ascent.

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

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

It came on me. I had gotten through the worst. I continued on to the top in a state of elation that was potentially as dangerous as an all-out funk. "Perfect," he said

when I joined him. "Now, we'll try you on tougher stuff," and began packing the gear for the drive to the next step.

I slipped from a horizontal position. I grasped and a couple of feet, following as sure that I began to go down. The rope was hanging on the wall.

I made progress after that. Mr. Montague had accepted my father's invitation to take his two weeks' vacation variation of work. So, for two weeks, I went out every day with him. That afternoon on the rock I saw, he took along two of his climbing, but we had a full morning of my father's work of their climb, and I took no pleasure in their work. I felt more confident-like a person.

Mr. Montague and I preferred to be alone. Each day we took on some a different kind of work. I was introduced to higher jobs and projects with -3- learned how to go up with the wall. My back, his back holds and work-holds.

One's fears on the rock soon gain proportion. If one does not take the lead like Montague, but is belayed from above by a good climber, it soon becomes clear that you can afford on occasion to fall. Unaware, my first time up, of such relative security, I made every move as if a mistake might be my death. It took a second ascent that afternoon on a vertical column in The Precipices to make me aware that I was living in comparative safety. For when one move I made did not work and

I slipped from a fractional foothold, I plunged but a couple of feet, suffering no more than a scrape to my knee. The rope was belaying me from above.

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

Mr. Montague and I preferred to be alone. Each day he took me over a different kind of hazard. I was introduced to finger jams and pressure holds. I learned how to smear smooth rock with the heel of my hand. Lie-back holds and crack-backs were shown to me, foot jams and chimneys. He took me up squeeze chimneys and over slabs, gave me problems in mantling and hand traverses. Forgive me, but I mention these techniques to keep track of the different rock faces on which we spent our days. There were nights when the proper placement of pitons and bongs clanged in my head as I went to sleep, and I heard the hiss of the rope as Mr. Montague, on the lead, tugged

it through the carabiner above me.

I had fallen in love with the illimitable skill of the rock climber. Clumsy, using my arms more than my legs, and my will as a substitute for wisdom, I scratched my way up many a face, filthy with the effluvia of the stone. For those two weeks of summer, I did not have a finger, an elbow, or a knee which was not raw, and my thighs and shins acquired a hundred bruises, but I was happy. I expect I was more happy than not for the first time in my life, and thereby, at the age of seventeen, grasped a truth some choose never to go near: Happiness is experienced most directly in the intervals between terror. As each climb he led me to was, in general, more difficult than the one before, so did I rarely have a day in which I was not washed in sweat. I spent time with fear as intimately as a body down with flu knows fever. I learned the terrible law of fear. It had to be conquered or it collected, then invaded one's dreams. There were days when I could not complete a climb and had to go down. In rock climbing, it is harder, however, to descend than to climb--one's feet have to search for the holds, and they see less well than the fingers. So, I slipped often, and dangled on the rope, and sweated, and

knew myself doubly abject, and could not sleep that night for confronting my terror: I would have to return next day and do it again. A compelling transaction. One is raising at such times all the ships lost in childhood from loss of courage, yes, hoisting them up from the sea bottom of oneself. I felt as if all the childhood fears that weighed me down had begun their ascent to the surface--I was being delivered from the graveyard of lost hope. But what a chancy operation! Each time I failed to complete a climb, the fear I was hoping to free was not consumed but turned corrupt, and I felt rotten within.

Yet each time I succeeded after failing the day before, I received my dependable reward. For an hour, or for a night, I was happy. On the best day I had in those two weeks, which was the last day, Montague brought me back to Otter Cliffs and told me to take the lead. Notwithstanding all I had learned, going up first on the same ascent where I had begun, proved several times more difficult. Taking the lead, I had to hammer in my pitons as I went, my arm in such a catalepsy of controlled panic, it would cramp after every few raps of the hammer. Now the prospect of a fall was serious again. On the lead, I tried to put a piton in every five feet, knowing each prospective

fall could double the length since one might plummet from five feet above the last piton to five feet below. And that ten feet would double again should the lower piton pull out. Facing such a prospect, easy climbs became difficult.

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

Those two weeks did more for me than any operation on my skull. I had new standing in the family. My cousins gave way to Harry's opinions in passing squabbles, and my father took me out for a night of drinking in the modest bars of Bar Harbor. Toward the end of the evening, I was feeling as relaxed as a

piece of spaghetti cooked in wine, and my male parent, giving as usual no more sign of drink than his massive emanations of good or bad will, said--he was obviously in a splendid spirit--"Hugh Montague has a good opinion of you. That's the accolade, Harry. He doesn't have three words to say for any ten people."

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

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

In the event, Hugh Montague had a great deal to say to me. By the first drink, I had begun to babble--the intoxication of having encountered this vocation which was a sport, a skill, and an open-air monastery for the soul, augmented by my successful lead that very afternoon, not to mention my felicitous connection with bourbon the night before, as well as the great (if hitherto unadmitted) release of knowing Mr. Montague, fearsome godfather, would be gone

tomorrow, had me nattering. I was ready to take my vows never to betray the new discipline, but Mr. Montague cut me off.

"Harry, I'm going to tell you something which will hurt. I mean it, however, not only for your good, but the world's. I have kept a high opinion of you over these two weeks. You are going to make a good man, and I respect that doubly in your case because you were dealt paltry cards in childhood. I gather your mother is tiny."

"Yes."

"And not wholly dependable, according to your father."

"Not wholly."

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

"Yessir."

"From now on, when we're alone, you and I, I want you to call me by the name a few of my associates know. I have my

reasons for telling you now. The name is Harlot. Not to be confused with Harlow, Jean Harlow, but Harlot."

"Yessir."

"One of the most persistent little questions over at Foggy Bottom is why Montague chose that damn name. Sooner or later, they all make the pilgrimage over to my good side and have the touching simplicity to ask directly. As if I were hoping to tell! Should we become exceptional friends, I'll spill the beans. In twenty years."

"Yes, Harlot." I stopped. "It doesn't sound right."

"Never fear. You'll get used to it." He picked up the knuckles of a claw, twisted them apart without getting his fingertips caught on the spurs, and proceeded with his lobster-fork to pluck forth the meat.

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

He could as well have struck me in the face.

"Oh," I said. "Golly."

"It's not that you are bad. You are better than your physical skills. You have innate moxie. Of ten beginners one

might instruct, I say you would probably come in second or third from the best."

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

"No. Probably not. Hurt yourself certainly. But that's not my reason. It's more particular than that. Only the best of beginners should ever dream of going on. It's more than just a sport, you see, for brave ones like yourself." This was the first time anyone had ever called me brave.

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

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

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

"All right then," he said, "we will go further. A man who acquires high competence in rock-climbing is able to become the instrument of his own will. That's what we try to arrive at. That's what we're encouraged to desire from the year one. A child is taught not to soil his pants. Think of that. His bowels become the instrument of his will. And as we grow older, we often feel emotions that are as low and obstreperous as the embarrassing necessity, if caught in public, to take a drop." He used the word as though that were the only acceptable synonym ever to employ. "Nonetheless, we say to our good sphincter, so much the creature of our will, 'Tighten up, you fool.'

"Obviously, rock-climbing firms the upper regions of the will. But it's quite a process. About as dangerous as black magic. For every fear we are ready to confront is equally open to the devil. Should we fail, the devil leaps through the gap. He is there to soothe our cowardice. 'Stick with me,' says the Devil, 'and your cowardice will be forgiven and forgotten.' Whereas, rock climbing, when successful, closes the gap. Pinches the devil off. On the other hand, should we fail the rock-climbing, the devil returns two-fold. One cannot live for long with courage and cowardice forever alternating. If one is

not good enough at rock-climbing, one spends half one's time getting the devil out. That is what I call marking time. So long as we stay in place, we satisfy the Devil altogether. For he loves circular, obsessive, meaningless activity. Entropy is his meat. When all the world is nothing but a pendulum, Satan will inhabit the throne."

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

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

"Yessir."

"You bet. Hear me out. There's a story I was told about some far-fetched, terribly intense sect of Jewish people called Hasidim. They used to inhabit some of the more southern village ghettos in Russia and the Ukraine. It seems that one of their folk, a rabbi, was so devotional that he prayed to God forty times a day, and, finally, after forty years, grew impatient and said, 'God, I have loved You for so long that I

want You to reveal Yourself to me. Why won't You reveal Yourself to me?' Whereupon, God did just that. He revealed Himself. What do you think the rabbi did next?"

"I don't know."

Harlot began to laugh. I had never heard him give a full laugh before. It gave a clue to why he had chosen his name. Inside him were more people than one would have thought. His laugh was all over the place. "Well, Harry, the good rabbi dived right under the bed and began to howl like a dog. 'Oh, God,' he said, 'please do not reveal Yourself to me.' That, Harry, is a useful story. Before all else, God is awesome. It's the first thing to know. If Christ had not been sent to us, no one would ever have gotten out of the cave. Jehovah was too awesome. There would have been no modern civilization."

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

He seemed pleased with the question. "Glad you brought that up," he said, much as Richard Nixon would in years to come. "Harry, those cultures marked time. They were perfect examples of the obsessional. They kept time in place. Devil's abodes, all three, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Don't be impressed by how beautiful they were. The Devil, you must never forget

it, is the most beautiful creature God ever made. But spiritually, those cultures did not choose to emerge from the cave. They decorated the interior until it was as brilliant Plato's cave, but they weren't able to stir. It took Christ to come along and say, 'Forgive the sons for the sins of the fathers.' That's the day, Harry, that scientific inquiry was born. Even if we had to wait a millenium and more for Kepler and Galileo. But follow the logic: once the father begins to believe that his sons will not suffer for his acts of sacrilege, he grows bold enough to experiment. He looks upon the universe as a curious place, rather than as an almighty machine guaranteed to return doom for his curiosity. That was the beginning of the technological sleighride which may destroy us yet. The Jews, of course, being bypassed for two thousand years, had to keep dealing with Jehovah. They didn't have Christ. So they never forgot. God is awesome. 'Oh, God, do not reveal Yourself to me. Not all at once!'"

He paused. He ordered another drink for each of us, Hennessy for himself, and Old Harper's, I recollect, for me. "Let us have an Old Harper's for Young Harry," he actually said to the waitress, and went right back to his disquisition on the awesome: "I suspect that God is with us in some fashion on

every rock climb. Not to save us--how I detest that tit-nibbling psychology--God saves!--God at the elbow of all misbegotten mediocrities. As if all that God had to do was preserve the middling and the indifferent. No, God is not a St. Bernard dog to rescue us at every pass. God is near us when we are rock-climbing because that is the only way to get a good glimpse of Him. You experience God when you're extended a long way out beyond yourself and still trying to lift up from your fears. Get caught on a rock and of course you want to howl like a dog. Surmount that terror and you rise to a higher fear. That may be our simple purpose on earth. To rise to higher and higher levels of fear. If we succeed, we can, perhaps, share some of God's fear."

"His fear?"

"Absolutely. His fear of the great power He has given the Devil. There is no free will for man unless the Devil's powers are equal on this embattled planet to the Lord's. That is why," he said, "I don't want you to continue rock climbing. The brute fact is that you don't have the exquisite skills that are necessary. So you will convert all you have into a vice. You will keep finding a little courage and losing it. You could end up like one of those monumentally boring golfers who

work for years to improve their swing and never stop talking about it. Orotund blobs of narcissism."

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

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

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

"Of course. Your father asked me to spend my vacation this summer looking you over as a prospect. Nothing less. Your father has sides you might not suspect. I had other plans for these two weeks. But he said, 'More than anything, I want the boy to come aboard with us. Only, however, if you think he's right. It's too important a matter to be judged by my desires and affection.'"

"Did my father speak that way to you?"

"Most definitely."

"You told him I could come aboard?"

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

I was tempted to say, "There is nothing special about me,"--is that not the most painful single cry one can utter in adolescence?--but perhaps I was gifted with judgment. I kept my mouth shut.

"You're planning to go to Yale?"

"Yessir."

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

I laughed.

"Oh, yes," said my new associate, Harlot, "part of the underground railway. One of the stations on the route. At least for a few." He made a face. "As an old Harvard man, I don't like to say this, but Yale is a touch niftier to our purposes. Harvard gets quiffy about recruitment. It's a stinking irony since about half our top people do happen to

originate from Harvard. Well, as I always say, trust a good fellow so long as he doesn't go to Princeton."

Harlot held up his glass. We would drink to that. One knew all the merriment of drinking to the health of Annapurna as opposed to Nanda Devi. Then we shook hands and drove back to the Keep. In the morning Harlot left. We would stay in communication but I was not to be in the same room with him for several years.

As I was to discover in senior year at St. Matthew's, the rock climbing left its inheritance. I went from second shell to first on the 150 lb. crew and rowed against St. Paul's and Groton. I passed my Entrance Boards with good marks and one full leap ahead of my now domiciled dyslexia. I won the one fist-fight I had in my three years at St. Matthew's. I even worked out at wrestling which was difficult for me since I was still expunging from my brain every trace of the glom-job by the Assistant Chaplain (who always nodded when we passed.) My loins no longer felt impacted with pus. I did, indeed, get into Yale. I had had, as one would suspect, a sense of future mission all through my last year at St. Matthew's and it continued at college. I entered Yale with the full expectation that some instructor at one of the freshman inquiry desks would

finish the bowl, knew that angels watched me as I drank, and if I drank it all before the song was done, we would beat Harvard tomorrow. Hung over, puked-up within, we would serve our team from the stands, for we would be there to offer our devotion, our love, our manly ability to booze with the gods at Morey's. Only gods drank to the depths of a silver bowl. We would ring Yale Bowl with the might of our mission at Yale, which was to defeat Harvard tomorrow. God, didn't I guzzle it down, and the score next day was Yale-0 Harvard-13.

agreement on the sale. Why he needed that much money remained one more family mystery. Among the Hubbards, windfalls, disasters, and outright speculation were kept at a greater distance from the children than sexual disclosure; all we knew (and it was talked about in whispers) was "a damn shame. Got to sell the Keep. Boardman's idea." My father walked about for two weeks that summer with a mouth as tight as a South American dictator under palace arrest. I hardly cared. Until the last summer with Mr. Montague, my two weeks each year had been a dull bruise on my self-esteem--I loved the Keep less than the others, or so I thought. It was only in the following summer, which I spent at loose ends in Southampton with my mother, getting drunk with new, rich friends I did not like, and banging tennis balls through August days, that I began to miss the splendor of afternoon silences over the Maine hills.

The call to go back to The Keep was agreeable, therefore: the opportunity to see Harlot spoke of more. I assumed this must be the call to my profession. Indeed, I had kept my ambitions chaste. I was still like a girl who fell in love with a man who went away to war. If he had not come back for three years, no matter. The girl went on no

I do not know if I care to describe the changes. I would need a treasures-in-trash catalogue added to the insights of a geologist: Generations of Hubbards had left their strata. We used to have oak whatnots in corners, and blonde-wood Danish in the Cunard; one fine old drafting table at the Camp had come down to us from Doane Hadlock Hubbard (who also left us punctilious drawings of a proposed lookout tower one hundred feet high that he once planned to build on the southern head of the island). Along the walls were hordes of washed-out framed photographs, spotted, glass-cracked, oak-mitred, come down to us from the 1850's on. Then there were the color prints, long sun-faded, of Matisse, Braque, Dufy, Duchamps--all introduced by my mother. They had been kept, even if she never came back. Once up on a wall, things remained; it was a summer house. No wars of selection went on--merely, an accommodation of accumulation. The beds were a disaster area, summer-cottage pallets. Lumpy, broken-spring mattresses with old ticking, wooden bureaus with thick paint scored by fingernail scrapings to attest to hot bored summer afternoons, spider webs on casement windows, birds' nests under the eaves, and

mouse droppings in many an unused room were the price we paid for that much spread of house.

Rodman Knowles Gardiner and his wife fixed it up when they bought it from us. Kittredge's father, being a Shakespearean scholar (distantly related to the famous Shakespearean, George Kitteredge--also of Harvard but spelled with one more "e") knew enough about the unwinding of plots to stipulate in the deed of transfer (which later gave the Keep to his daughter for a wedding present) that in the event of her divorce from Hugh Montague, Kittredge was to own the house without impediment. Which is how I returned to living in it. By way of Kittredge. But that was in time to come. Now in the Easter of my Junior year at Yale, more than two years after the closing with the Hubbards, Dr. Gardiner and his wife had certainly spruced up the Keep. Retired from teaching, they moved some of their best Colonial furniture from their Cambridge house to Maine. There were drapes now on the windows and the walls bore Dr. Gardiner's collection of nineteenth-century Victorian paintings. The bedrooms had new beds. At first sight, I hated it all. We now looked like a New England hostelry of

the sort that keeps the temperature too high in winter and screws down the windows.

I spent a difficult two hours after my arrival. Neither Hugh Montague nor his fiancée were there--instead, I was received by the eminent Shakespearean and his wife, Maisie. They endured me; I suffered. He was a Harvard professor of a variety who may no longer exist today. Dr. Gardiner was so well established that there were tiers to his eminence. Stages of his personality, much like assistants in a descending chain of command, were delegated to conversation. We spoke of the Yale and Harvard football teams in the previous Fall, then of my category in squash--I was a B-group player--and of my father whom Dr. Gardiner had last seen with Mr. Dulles at an annual garden party in Washington: "He looked very well indeed--of course, that was last year."

"Yessir. He still looks well."

"Good for him."

As a tennis player, Dr. Gardiner would not have let you enjoy volleys during the warm-up. He'd drive your innocent return cross-court and leave you to trot after it.

Maisie was not conspicuously better. She spoke of the too big flower garden she would put in this May; she intoned in a dreary if nonetheless dulcet voice against the unpredictability of spring weather in Maine. She mentioned the hybrids she would plant; when I offered mention of some wild flowers to look for in June and July, she lost much interest in me. Conversational pauses expanded into an extension of themselves. In desperation, I tried to charge into Dr. Gardiner's center of strength. I expatiated on a term paper (for which I had received an A) on Ernest Hemingway's work and since Green Hills of Africa. The consciously-chosen irony of the later style showed, I said, that he had been enormously influenced by King Lear, particularly by some of Kent's lines, and I quoted from Act I, Scene 4, "I do prefer. . .to love him that is loved, to converse with him that is wise and say little, to fear judgment, to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish." I was about to add, "I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly," but Dr. Gardiner said, "Why concern yourself with the copyist?"

We sat in silence. After a stretch, Kittredge and Hugh Montague came back in the twilight. They had been--it was a

very cold Easter--ice climbing on parts of the lower trail of Gorham Mountain. Nice stuff, they assured me. They looked full of red cheeks and Christmas.

She was lovely beyond any measure I had for a woman. Her dark hair was cut short like a boy's, and she was wearing pants and a windbreaker, but she was the most wonderful looking girl. Dr. Gardiner had collected Christina Gabriela Rossetti's and Bulwer-Lytton's for his walls, heroines pale as their cloisters, lovely as angels. That was Kittredge. Except her color, after the afternoon's ice climb, was as startling as a view of wild red berries in a field of snow.

"It's wonderful to meet you. We're cousins. Did you know that?" she asked.

"I suppose I did."

"I looked it up last evening. Third cousins. That's No-Man's-Land if you get down to it." She laughed with such a direct look (as if to speak of how very attractive someone younger than herself might be if she liked them) that Hugh Montague actually stirred. I knew little enough yet of jealousy, but I could feel the wave that came over from him.

"Well, I must tell you," she said, "all the while Hugh was taking us up this dreadful pitch, I kept saying I wouldn't marry him until he promised never to do such a thing to me again, whereupon he said, 'You and Harry Hubbard are in the same boat.' He banishes us equally from his grubby art."

"Actually," said Hugh Montague, "she's a little better than you, Harry. All the same, it's hopeless."

"Well, I should hope so," said Maisie Gardiner. "Fool's play to risk your neck on ice."

"I love it," said Kittredge. "The only thing Hugh would bother to explain was: 'Ice won't betray you until it does.' What a husband you will make."

"Relatively secure," said Hugh.

Rodman Knowles Gardiner had a coughing fit at the thought of his daughter in marriage.

At precisely that moment, Kittredge said, "I believe Daddy thinks of me as Desdemona."

"I don't see myself," said her father, "as a blackamoor, nor espoused to my daughter. You have rotten logic, darling."

Kittredge changed the subject.

"Never did any ice-climbing?" she asked of me. When I shook my head, Kittredge said, "it's no worse than the awful thing they do to you at The Farm when you have to leap out of a mud ditch and scramble up a link fence in between sweeps of the searchlight." She stopped, but not in caution, more to calculate when I would be eligible for that chore. "I guess you'll be getting into it year after next. The fence is modelled on the Grosse-Ullner barrier in East Germany."

Hugh Montague gave a smile with no amusement in it. "Kittredge, don't practice indiscretion as if it were your métier."

"No," said Kittredge, "I'm home. I want to talk. We're not in Washington, and I'm tired of pretending through one blah-blah cocktail party after another that I'm a little file clerk at Treasury. 'Oh,' they say, 'what do you file?' 'Oodles of stuff,' I tell them back. 'Statistics.' They know I'm lying. Obviously, I'm a madwoman spook. It stands out."

"What stands out is how spoiled you are," said her fiancée.

"How could I not be? I'm an only child," said Kittredge. "Aren't you?" she went on to ask.

"By half," I said and when no one responded, I felt obliged to give a summary explanation.

She appeared to be fascinated. "You must be full," she said, "of what I call ghost-overlays." She held up a marvelous white hand as if she were playing traffic cop in a skit at a charity ball. "But I promised everybody I would not theorize this weekend. Some people drink too much. I never stop theorizing. Do you think it's a disease, Hugh?"

"Preferable to drink," he offered.

"I'll tell you about ghost-overlays when we're alone," she declared to me in front of him.

I winced within. Hugh Montague was possessive. If she smiled nicely at me, he saw the end of their romance in her smile. Ultimately, he was right--it is just that lovers condense all schedules. What would take us more than fifteen years looked like immediate danger.

On the other hand, he was bored. It was the most peculiar weekend. Carrying on a conversation with Rodman and Maisie Gardiner was equal to taking dinner in a room where light bulbs keep going off and on. Most of the time

Dr. Gardiner: "The spinnaker ripped in the Backside Regatta. I had to finish with a jenny. Half as much headway."

Montague: "Three cheers for making the honor roll again, Harry."

Dr. Gardiner: "I'm going to fill the martini shaker."

Kittredge and I had, nonetheless, one hour alone. She demanded it. On Sunday morning, coming back from Easter Mass, with an hour to wait for Maisie's cook to serve us Sunday dinner, she forced the situation. "I want Harry to show me the island," she said to Hugh, "I'm sure he knows the nooks and crannies." A lack of plausibility quivered in the air. It would not require a guide to find nooks and crannies on our small island.

Hugh nodded. He smiled. He held out his hand like a pistol, thumb up, forefinger extended. Wordlessly, he fired a shot at me. "Keep those nasal passages clean, Herrick," he said.

Kittredge and I walked in kelp and sea-wrack on the pebbled shore. Near us reared the unseen presence of Harlot, a stallion over the field of our mood.

"He's awful," Kittredge said at last and took my hand. "I adore him but he's awful. He's raunchy. Harry, do you love sex?"

"I would hate to think I didn't," I said.

"Well, I do like it. It's sex with Hugh and me. We have little else in common. That's why he's jealous. His Omega is virtually void of libido and his Alpha is overloaded. So how can he be conspicuously stable on the subject?"

I did not know as yet that she had been consorting with these two principalities, Alpha and Omega, ever since the concept first came to her four years ago. Now I had heard the dire words for the first time. I would encounter them again over the next thirty years.

"What makes it worse," she said, "is that I'm still a virgin. I think he is too, although he won't offer a conclusive word about it."

I was twice shocked, once at these astonishing facts, and again that she would tell me. She laughed, however. "I take a True Confession pill every night," she said. "Are you a virgin, Harry?"

"Regrettably," I replied.

She laughed and laughed. "I don't want to be," she confided. "It's absurd. It isn't as if Hugh and I don't know each other's bodies rather well. In fact, we know them perfectly. We're very much naked together. That kind of truth binds us. But he insists on waiting for marriage to consummate the last part."

"Well, you'll be wed soon, I guess."

"In June," she said. "We were supposed to gather up a few final plans this weekend, but Daddy and Hugh when put together are hopeless. Worse than two relics in an old folks' home trying to make conversation with each other's dentures."

It was my turn to laugh. It went on for so long I had to sit down. She sat beside me. We perched on the southern head of the island (where Doane Hubbard's lookout tower never went up) and looked down Blue Hill Bay to the cold Easter sun shining over the remote Atlantic.

"Hugh may be the most complicated person I've encountered," she said, "but this weekend he's ridiculously simple. He's in a thundering grouch because we can't get together at night. Daddy insisted on putting me in the room next to Mother and him. So, Hugh is falling apart. He's

outrageously priapic, you see. Back in Washington, he's on me all the time. I hope you don't mind hearing this, Harry. I've got to talk."

"Yes," I said. I didn't know what she was talking about. The facts seemed to contradict each other. "How can he be on you," I asked, "if you're both virgins?"

"We go in for what he calls 'the Italian solution.'"

"Oh," I said. I didn't know any more. Then I did. It was physically painful to contemplate what she allowed him to do. Nor could I conceive how it connected with all her soap and sunlight.

"Actually," she said with the quick, rising zephyr of a Radcliffe girl, "I love it. It's debauched. To be a virgin and yet feel so wanton. Harry, it's opened a purview on the Renaissance for me. Now I see how they could observe the Catholic forms and yet live in such near-mortal violation of so much. That's not the unhealthiest approach, you know."

"Do you talk this way to everyone?" I asked.

"Heavens, no," she said. "You're special."

"How can that be? You don't know me."

"I only needed one look. Before it's over, I said to myself, I'm going to tell this man everything. You see, Harry, I love you."

"Oh," I said. "I guess I love you too." I did not have to guess. The image of Hugh Montague, hot as a satyr on her back, left me as criminally wounded as if I were indeed her lover. I hated how her quick news had reached so easily to the very center of me.

"You and I are never going to do anything about it," she said. "We're cousins and that's what we'll always be. Dearest friends. At worst, we'll be kissing cousins." She gave the littlest example of such a kiss to my lips. That, too, went all the way in. Her mouth had the scent of a petal just separated from the flower. I had never been near a nicer breath. Nor one with more surprises. It was like picking up a great novel and reading the first sentence. Call me Ishmael.

"Some day," she said, "after Hugh and I are tired of each other, maybe you and I will have an affair. Just the passing kind to give a lot of naughty pleasure."

"Kissing cousins," I replied hoarsely.

"Yes. Only, not now. Harry, I need a good friend. I need one like pure stink. I need somebody I can tell everything to. Don't you?"

"I'm incapable of telling all," I confessed, as if I had numerous adventures meticulously secreted away.

"You are buttoned up. It's what I brought you out of the house for. I want to talk about your ghost-overlays."

"Is that phrase from your psychological theories?"

"Yes."

"My father told me you're a genius. Allen Dulles says so."

"Well, I'm not," she said petulantly as if the stupidity of the supposition doubled every likelihood of great loneliness. "I have a brain that's marvelously empty when I'm not using it. So thoughts enter which other people would sweep away. Everyone thinks I have so much intellectual stuff. Whereas I have less than most. But, in consequence, I am open to suggestion. Don't you think the heavens often try to reach us with their messages fully as much as dark forces below have the power to tickle our impulses? That's reasonable, wouldn't you say?"

I nodded. I would not have known how to argue with this. But then, she was not looking for a debate. From her change in tone, I could sense that she had matters to expound.

"I've always found Freud uncongenial," she said. "He was a great man with bushels of discoveries, but he really had no more philosophy than a stoic. That's not enough. Stoics make good plumbers. The drains go bad and you've got to hold your nose and fix them. End of Freud's philosophy. If people and civilization don't fit--which we all know anyway--why, says Freud, make the best of a bad lot."

I knew she had made that speech before. How often she must have had to explain her thesis to people on the job. So I took it as a mark of friendship that she wished to outline it for me. Besides, I enjoyed listening to her voice. It was free of all the burnt insulation that comes from the kind of mind that is wired to discharge its idea into your mind. I felt she would give this lecture because she wanted us to be closer. And felt a pure pang of the nicest kind of love. She was so beautiful, and so lonely. Wildflowers in her hair, and blue sneakers on her feet. I

wanted to hug her, and would have, if not for a sense of the prodigiously long shadow of Hugh Montague.

"Philosophically speaking," she went on, "I am very much a dualist. I do not see how one can not be. It was all very well for Spinoza to postulate his Substance, that wonderfully elusive, metaphysical, metaphorical world-goo he employed to bind all opposites together and so be able to declare himself a monist. But I believe he was scuttling the philosophical bark. If God was trying to tell us anything, it is that every idea we have of Him, and of the universe, is dual. Heaven and Hell, God and the Devil, good and evil, birth and death, day and night, hot and cold, male and female, love and hate, freedom and bondage, consciousness and dreaming, the actor and the observer--I could add to such a list forever. We are conceived out of the meeting of one sperm and one ovum. On the first instant of our existence, at the moment of our creation, we are brought to life by the joining of two separate entities, and very much unlike they are. Immediately, we start to develop with a right side and a left side. Two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two lips, two sets of teeth, two lobes

to the brain, two to the lungs, two arms, two hands, two legs, two feet."

"One nose," I said.

She had heard this before. "The nose is only a work of flesh surrounding two tunnels."

"One tongue," I said.

"Which has a top and a bottom and they're awfully different." She put her tongue out at me.

"Five fingers on each hand."

"The thumb is in opposition to the others. The big toe used to be in opposition to the foot."

We began to laugh. "Two testicles," I said, "but one penis."

"It's the weak link in my theory."

"One navel," I went on.

"You're awful," she said. "You're implacable."

"One head of hair."

"Which you part." She ruffled my hair. We almost kissed again. It was delicious to be flirting with a third cousin who was a couple of years older than me.

"Try to be solemn," she said. "There's really more evidence of duality than singularity. I decided to take the

next step. What if there are not only two nostrils, two eyes, two lobes to the brain, so forth, but two psyches as well, absolutely and separately equipped. They travel through life inside one person like Siamese twins, or, at least, they are like such twins in one respect. Everything that happens to one, happens to the other. If one gets married, the other is along for the ride. Otherwise, they are different. They can be just a little different, like identical twins, or they can be vastly different, like good and evil." She stopped for a nearer example. "Or optimism and pessimism. I'm going to choose that because it's more comfortable to discuss. Whatever happens to us obviously has optimistic overtones, and pessimistic possibilities. Suppose Alpha and Omega--for those are the two names I've applied to these two psyches--one has to offer them some kind of name, and A and Z belongs in a mailorder catalogue--so, Alpha and Omega. It is pretentious. No matter. Alpha, let us say for this example, tends to be optimistic in most situations, whereas Omega is the pessimist. Each experience that reaches them is interpreted with different sensitivities, so to speak. Alpha sees what might be positive in a specific situation; Omega anticipates

what is to be lost. The same is true for any duality you wish to invoke. Take night and day. Omega, for the sake of argument, is a little more responsive to nocturnal experiences than Alpha. In the morning, however, Alpha is better at getting up and going off to work."

Somewhere in the course of this short lecture, she had begun to change. I now found her less attractive. As if to prove the presence of Alpha and Omega within herself, the charms of her intimacy, so innocent and audacious at once, drew back, and I saw the pedant in her soul--a potentially tiresome fellow ready for tyrannies of exposition. Each person before her could sooner or later be seen as pure mind on a Petri dish, ready to be inoculated with new culture.

When she paused, I had to say something. There was no choice. One would have to win both sides of this woman. It also occurred to me that I was being not all faithful to my loyalty to Hugh Montague, but what the hell, that might be my Omega speaking. "I just don't see," I said, "why Alpha and Omega have to react differently all the time."

"Remember," she said, holding up an instructor-like finger, "Alpha and Omega originate from separate creatures.

One is descended from the sperm cell--Alpha; Omega from the ovum."

"You are saying we have a male and a female psyche inside ourselves?"

"Why not? There's nothing mechanical about it," said Kittredge. "The male side can be full of the so-called female qualities whereas Omega can be an outrageous bull of a woman just as virile and muscular as a garbage collector." She gave a merry look as if to show the return of her Alpha. Or was it Omega? "God wants us to be as various and faceted as kaleidoscopes. Which looks to the next point: The war between God and the Devil usually goes on in both psychic entities. That's normal. Schizophrenics tend to separate good and evil altogether, but in more balanced people, God and the Devil fight not only in Alpha, but somewhat differently in Omega."

"There seems to be endless capacity for strife in your system."

"Of course there is. Doesn't that fit closer to human nature than simple black and white conflict?"

"Well," I said, "I still can't see why the Creator desired such a complicated design."

"Because he wished to give us free will," she said.
"Free will amounts to giving the Devil equal opportunity."

"How can you say that?" I blurted out. "You're so sure of yourself."

"It's what I think," she said simply. "Don't you see, we have a true and real need for two developed psyches, each with their own super-ego, ego, and id. That way, one can feel some three-dimensionality, so to speak, in our moral experience. If Alpha and Omega are quite unlike, and, believe me, they invariably are, then they can look upon the same happening from two separate points of view. It's why we have two eyes. For the same reason. So we can estimate distance."

"Account for this," I said. "When our eyes become too different from each other, we need glasses."

"Precisely. Just as disturbed people need pills."

"Well, isn't that a point? If Alpha and Omega are awfully different, how can a person function?"

"Look at Hugh," she said. "His Alpha and Omega must be as far apart as the sun and the moon. Great people, and artists, and extraordinary men and women have dramatically

different Alpha and Omega. Of course, so do the feeble-minded, the addictive, and the psychotic."

Right here, in the middle of all this, I felt the waning of the afternoon, and knew a schoolboy's sorrow. This now magical weekend would end this evening. Time was going by and who knew when I would see her again? Nonetheless, I was wise enough to continue to serve as foil for any argument. "What then," I asked, "makes the difference between an artist and a psychotic?"

"Why, the quality of inner communication. Between Alpha and Omega. If Alpha and Omega are incredibly different, but manage all the same to express their separate needs to each other, then you have an extraordinary person who has the power to find exceptional solutions. Artists, for example. You see, when Alpha and Omega don't communicate, then one or the other must become the master or there's a standstill. So, the loser is oppressed beneath. That's a desperately inefficient way of living."

"Like totalitarianism?"

"Precisely. You do see what I'm talking about."

I was awfully pleased to hear that. Encouraged, I asked: "Would a healthier person have an Alpha and Omega

decisions. If that entity, for whatever reason, doesn't function properly, well, Harry, the person is good spy material. He has to act out the two halves of his double self. Alpha has to have a full role, and so does Omega. So spies live double lives. Overtly so. It's a most fruitful line of inquiry for comprehending them. In the absence of their own psychic overseer, the case officer becomes one."

I nodded. I was wondering if her mode of presentation might not be too direct, too unadorned. Most of the heavier, that is, respected intellectuals I had met at Yale seemed obliged on first meeting to fire off an artillery barrage of great and/or esoteric authors they had presumably absorbed. With Kittredge, however, one citing of Spinoza plus one reference to Freud seemed to take care of it. She had not sent out a cavalry of readings from essential books to turn my flank. She pursued her thoughts; they were enough. I thought she showed the forceful but innocent head of an inventor. Anything she took in could become a piece of her thesis.

Well, we went on talking. We never came to ghost-overlays, but before we were done with our hour in the nooks and crannies of Doane, I had certainly decided that

she put forward a good many ideas! Just what they came to would take some sorting out. Of course, I was somewhat offended at how she preferred the exposition of her thought to our flirtation. Before we went back to the house, therefore, I tried to tease her. I asked her to confess: who was her own Alpha, her own Omega?

"Oh," she said, "others perceive such things better than oneself. Tell me your impressions of where they are in me."

"Oh," I said in imitation of her voice, "I think your Alpha is full of loyalty and your Omega is as treacherous as the tides. Alpha is surfeited with chastity, and Omega is unbalanced with sacrilege. You're a spontaneous child on one side and an empire-builder on the other."

"You're a devil through and through," she said, and gave me another kiss on the lips.

Nothing will ever tell me for certain whether Harlot saw that small embrace or merely sensed it. As we walked back, hand in hand, we came on him standing above a rock, holding a view of our approach. I have no idea of how long he had been there, but some constraint in the pit of my heart, seemed confirmed. He certainly did not alter his

manner, but intimacy between Kittredge and me was singed by his presence. The word is just. My eyebrows felt like ash when he was near. Jealousy may be an electro-magnetic phenomenon after all. I would pay for my hour with his fiancée through all of my first few years in the CIA, and never know why. I did not know then, but can tell you now, that Harlot was marrying up. He came from a very wealthy family who had made their money in mouth-wash. Years later, Kittredge told me that he concealed the name of the product from her until she told him one day it must be Lavoris.

"Never Lavoris," he answered. "They were our competitor."

What I have next to relate is painful. That Easter Sunday evening, Dr. Gardiner gave vent to the buried furies in his throat, and honored his guests: He read Shakespeare aloud to us by the fire in the den.

He offered an early work: Titus Andronicus. An odd choice. I would not recognize how bizarre until I knew the family better. Dr. Gardiner considered Titus Andronicus one of Shakespeare's poorest plays. Uninspired, and much too dreadful. Yet Dr. Gardiner read from it on Sunday night with a voice full of passion, choosing the terrible speech

where Titus tells Chiron and Demetrius that in consequence of their vile acts on him and his family--they have severed his hand and cut off both hands of his daughter, Lavinia--he, Titus, will now revenge himself.

"Hark, wretches! How I mean to martyr you,
"This one hand yet is left to cut your throats,
"Whilst Lavinia 'tween her stumps doth hold
"The basin that receives your guilty blood.
"Hark, villains, I will grind your bones to dust,
"And with your blood and it I'll make a paste;
"And of the paste a coffin I will rear;
"And make two pasties of your shameful heads.

"And now prepare your throats. Lavinia, come,
"Receive the blood, and when that they are dead,
"Let me go grind their bones to powder small.
"And with this hateful liquor temper it;
"And in that paste let their vile heads be baked.
"Come, come, be everyone officious
"To make this banquet, which I wish might prove
"More stern and bloody than the Centaur's feast."

He recited it in the full sonority of a renowned lecture voice, gave it all the Elizabethan hullabaloo due vowels and consonants grappling with one another over hurdles and down falls: how he relished the conjunctive

sinews of these words. Hair stood on my neck. I knew then what a sixth sense was hair.

"I do not approve of the play," said Dr. Gardiner when he was done, "but the bile of the ages is in the boil of those words. Fabulous stuff."

Maisie had fallen asleep while he read. Her head was to one side, her mouth was open, and I thought for a moment she had suffered a stroke. I was mistaken. She had merely taken her nightly jolt of three seconds; soon, Dr. Gardiner walked her up to bed. It would also take years before I learned--how many little confessions was Kittredge eventually to make!--that Dr. Gardiner had a preferred means of connubial union: It was to investigate Maisie while she slept. Kittredge discovered her father's habit when she was ten. She peeped and saw it all. In sleep, Maisie, a wanton of Morpheus, made cries like a bird.

Husbands and wives have been known to discover that their separate childhoods are curiously linked: Kittredge and I had both seen our parents in the act of love. Or, more to the fact, we had, between us, seen three of our four parents. Titus and Lavinia, taken together, had lost three of their four hands. The allusion is meaningless, I am

certain, except that numbers command their own logic, and Augustus Farr must have been on his promenade that night while Dr. Gardiner and his somnolent Maisie were transported to those underworlds who dwell beneath the navel.

I returned to the Keep in June for the marriage of Hadley Kittredge Gardiner to Hugh Tremont Montague. My father and stepmother, my brothers, my uncles, aunts, and cousins, were there in the gathering of good Maine summer families. The Prescotts and the Peabodys came, the Finletters and Griswolds, the Herters, and the Places. Even Mrs. Collier from Bar Harbor together with half of the Bar Harbor Club took the crooked twenty-mile journey west across the fifteen miles of the island to the back side. Contingents were present from Northeast

Harbor and Seal Harbor, and David Rockefeller attended. Desmond and Marietta FitzGerald were in view and Clara Fargo Thomas; Allen Dulles flew up from Washington with Richard Bissell and Richard Helms, Tracy Barnes and Frank Wisner, James Angleton and Miles Copeland. One of my cousins, Colton Shaler Hubbard, who liked to see himself as the operative definition of a wag, was heard to say, "Drop a bomb on this shindig and U.S. Intelligence is gone to smithereens."

It is no part of my intention to expatiate on the floral arrangements chosen by Maisie, nor the sober character of our Episcopal church, Saint Anne of the Trinity in the Woods (which has been quietly criticized since the turn of the century for its penurious Presbyterian air) and I am certainly not equipped to describe the niceties of the wedding gown brocades. I speak of the nuptials because they confirmed my suspicion that I was in love with Kittredge, and that proved to be the most inexpensive, self-sustaining, and marvelous love a young man could attach himself to. For a long time, it cost me no more than the luxurious enrichment of my self-pity which was promoted on the day of the wedding from the spiritual equivalent of a sigh to the deepest mahogany melancholy. I was in love with a beautiful, brilliant girl who was married to the

most elegant and incisive gent I had ever met; there was no hope for me but, oh, the love was beautiful.

Mr. Dulles seemed to agree. Soon after we assembled back at the Keep for the wedding party, he stood up and (very much in his function as Director of CIA) gave the first toast. I still remember how delicately he held his glass yet with what a sense of gravity.

"The Greco-Roman concept of the healthy mind in the healthy body is personified by our good and brave colleague, Hugh Tremont Montague," were Dulles' first words. "Indeed, if it were not for the one prodigality he shares with me--no, let me say in which he surpasses me--at squandering the once rich crop of his hair, we could speak of the perfect fellow." Polite but happily unweighted laughter passed gently through the room. "For those few of you who are unconnected to the legends of his heroic exploits in OSS during the war, let me say that you must take it on faith. His feats, for the present, remain in the bailiwick of the highly classified. For equally good cause, I cannot begin to describe the work he does now except to hint that is he not only indispensable but the full possessor of a grand and redoubtable fief in our midst, and this before he is even properly middleaged." Sweet light laughter. "Nonetheless, for all his sterling attributes, he is

still the luckiest fellow in the world. He is marrying a young lady of incommensurate beauty who, if I dare to grow portentous on so festive an occasion, has also become by dint of inspiration, talent, and study, a psychological theorist of a power and persuasion to inspire all Jungians and confound all Freudians. When she was still an undergraduate at Radcliffe, I happened to be shown her Senior Thesis and it was a wonder. I break a little confidence by saying I was quick to tell her, 'Kittredge, we've got to have you. You must join us. Your thesis is a marvel and I can promise you that we need it. You have given us a tool to get near the psychology of the double agent. So I won't hear no. You, Kittredge, are coming aboard.' How could a young lady, confronted by such admiration for her intellectual powers, not give her assent? And I, in turn, holding this cup for the toast, must lift up my heart as well. It, too, is close to overflowing. God bless you both. May He sanctify your marriage, handsome, half-bald Hugh Montague, and our own Hadley Kittredge Gardiner, here with us, yet remaining on such close terms with the divine."

Afterward, I had been introduced in a rush as the Director was leaving, and there was time to receive no more than a foursquare handshake and the friendliest smile. "Your father is one whale of a fellow, Harry," he said with eyes to twinkle

APPLICANT: Once I came close, but held off.

INTERROGATOR: Fine. I can read you. Let's move on.

APPLICANT: Let's.

INTERROGATOR: Get along with women?

APPLICANT: I've been known to.

INTERROGATOR: Consider yourself normal?

APPLICANT: You bet.

INTERROGATOR: Why am I getting a flutter?

APPLICANT: You're asking me to volunteer a response?

INTERROGATOR: Let me re-phrase it. Is there anything you do with women that community consensus might consider out of the ordinary?

APPLICANT: Do you mean--unusual acts?

INTERROGATOR: Specify.

APPLICANT: Can I be asked a specific question?

INTERROGATOR: Do you like blow jobs?

APPLICANT: I don't know.

INTERROGATOR: Overlarge response.

APPLICANT: Yes, sir.

INTERROGATOR: Yessir, what?

APPLICANT: Yes, to the blow job.

INTERROGATOR: Don't look so unhappy. This won't keep us from accepting you. On the other hand, if you were to lie in this test, it could hurt you a lot.

APPLICANT: Thank you, sir. I understand.

I still get a whiff of the old perspiration. I was lying to the lie-detector: In the early summer of 1955, I was a virgin. Even if two-thirds of my class at Yale shared such chastity, anything was better than confessing to such shameful innocence. How could a CIA man be a virgin? Down the line, I would learn that many another applicant lied to protect the same green secret. That was all right. The tests were looking to screen out men who might be vulnerable to blackmail. Well-raised college graduates, however, claiming more amatory experience than they'd earned, could be accepted just as they were.

During those weeks of testing, I lived in the YMCA and shared meals in drug stores with other applicants. They, for the most part, had come from state universities and had taken

than a quarter mile along the Reflecting Pool toward Washington Monument. On gray and barren winter mornings those buildings looked not wholly unlike pictures I had seen of Dachau, same long two-story sheds that went on forever. We were jammed into quarters thrown up for government offices in the Second World War, and scattered as well over many a side street, and in many a fine old house__built long ago on the swampy fields in Foggy Bottom. Special bottle-green government busses took us from building to building. We filled out questionnaires, and walked in the self-conscious groupings of inductees, and I pretended, as I say, to be just like the others. In truth, so dislocated was this existence from all I had known at Yale, that I felt myself a stranger in my own land. Such feelings were most likely to come over me in the course of listening to a lecture in ubiquitous classrooms with flat beige walls, a blackboard, an American flag in a stand, a dark gray stain-compatible carpet and portable lecture chairs with a small one-arm writing table attached. My classmates showed the same good American crew cuts as myself (good for at least eighty per cent of us) and if our collective demeanor was somewhere between the YMCA and the Harvard Business School, it did not mean I was yet in the least like any of them. I was discovering how little I knew about my countrymen, at least those who were trying like

me to get into CIA. Nor did I feel altogether real to myself. That, on reflection, was a familiar wind in the lonely harbors of my chest, Had I always lived in such a condition except for my cossetted years at Yale?

Occasionally, I voyaged out to the canal-house in Georgetown which Kittredge and Harlot bought in the first year of their marriage, and such evenings were full of stimulation for me, if wholly unpredictable. Most of their dinner guests were intimates, but some were grand. Henry Luce was there one night and took me aside long enough to inform me that he knew my father. Mr. Luce had white hair and hugely heavy black eyebrows, and his voice turned husky as he said to me, "It's a wonderful life you're going to have. Momentous decisions, and the best of it is that they will count! I've worked on occasion on endeavors much larger than myself or my own interests, and I can tell you, Harry, since we share the same diminutive, whether from Herrick or Henry, that there's no comparison. Doing it for the larger dream is what it is all about, Harry!" Like a reverend, he did not release me until he took his hand from my shoulder. Nor could I pretend to myself that I was ungrateful for the speech, since after evenings at the Montagues, I would go back to my brother dogs at the Y, to find them worrying where the next bone was going to be thrown.

I, however, would feel like a radioactive dog. I would glow within. I had seen the Company, and it was there. The CIA was not merely long shed-like buildings, or the dead-tank smells of people crowded into impossibly small office spaces, nor leering inquisitors who strapped belts and instruments to your body, no, CIA was also a company of the elegant, secretly gathered to fight a war so noble that one could and must be ready to trudge for years through the mud and the pits. Ah, those evenings at the canal-house--I was there often enough in my first season on the Potomac. Indeed, it was Harlot who was the first to tell me I was in, certified and in, on the day after my last test. My fellow dogs at the Y would have to wait three more days to obtain as much knowledge, and I suffered with this secret I could not relate to them, and so discovered that holding a confidence when one wishes to let it out, is comparable to thirsting for a shot of liquor on an awful day.

After acceptance, we reported one morning for our orientation lecture. Perhaps a hundred of us were taken by bus from the 9th Street Personnel Pool to an old five story house with a Queen Anne roof behind the State Department. There, we crowded into a small basement auditorium. A man sitting up on the stage whom I would have taken for an Ivy League professor,

stood up to welcome us and said, "In case any of you are wondering, you will now be working for CIA."

We laughed. We applauded. He strode across the stage to an easel on which a cloth was draped. Whisking the sheet away, he revealed the first of our Scrolls--a secret organizational chart. With a pointer, he informed us that the Agency had three Directorates which could be envisaged as analogous to three sister corporations, or three regiments of a division: "The Directorate for Plans gathers intelligence. It directs spies. Learn a new word. Plans runs spies, even as you would run a business." Since espionage and counter-espionage were Harlot's province, and covert action belonged to my father, the Directorate of Plans was nine-tenths of CIA for me.

Then he went on to speak of the Directorate for intelligence which analyzed the material gathered by Plans, and the Directorate for Administration "which keeps in order the management of the first two Directorates." Needless to say, I had no interest in either.

"Gentlemen," he continued, "you hundred and three men--" he looked about--"or, if I avail myself of the indispensable tool of precision, you one hundred and one men and two women, have been chosen for the Directorate of Plans. That is a fine place to be."

We cheered. We stood up and cheered him, but not for long because next, Allen Dulles, now Director of Central Intelligence, came through the curtains to speak. On this day, Mr. Dulles had a genial, courteous, even benign warmth of the sort that would enable you to believe in any establishment with which he was associated, whether bank, university, law firm, or branch of government. Dressed in old tweeds with leather patches for the elbows, a nifty bow-tie, his pipe in hand, his spectacles as bright with reflected light as intelligence itself, he was quickly successful in giving all one hundred plus of us the same impression he had given me at the wedding.

"Seeing you here at the beginning of your careers, I can all but promise that they will be lively, worthwhile, exciting careers." We applauded, "Winston Churchill, after Dunkirk, could only offer the gallant British people 'blood, sweat, toil, and tears,' but I can promise you dedication, sacrifice, total absorption, and--don't let this get out--a hell of a lot of fun." We whooped.

"You are all in Plans, an uncommon group. You will live, most of you, in many countries, you will doubtless see action, you will--no matter how tired and weary--never lose sense of the value of your work. For you will be defending your country against a foe whose resources for secret war are greater than

any government or kingdom in the history of Christendom. The Soviet Union has raised the art of espionage to unprecedented heights. Even in times of so-called thaw, they wage their operations with unflagging vigor.

"In order to catch up, we are in the process of building the greatest agency for intelligence the Western world has seen. The safety of this country depends on no less. Our opponent is formidable. And you, here, have been chosen to be part of the great shield which resists our formidable foe."

You could feel the happiness in the room. No matter the small basement stage with its American flag to one side, we shared, at this moment, the warmth of a venerable theater as the curtain descends to a momentous conclusion.

He was hardly finished, however. It was not Mr. Dulles' style to end on a major note. More agreeable was to remind us that we had been accepted into a fellowship; our rights included the privilege of being told a story at the expense of the leader. So Allen Dulles recounted a tale about Allen Dulles.

"Years ago," he said, "when I was as young as most of you, I was posted by our foreign service to Geneva during World War I, and I remember one particularly warm spring Saturday in 1917 when I was on watch for the morning duty. There was, however,

little to do in the office, and all I could think about was tennis. You see, I had a date for tennis that afternoon with a young lady who was lovely and comely and beautifully composed. . .a veritable knockout!"

Who else could speak in such a way? In this pre-Civil War basement which might, more than ninety years ago, have heard cannonading to the south, Allen Dulles was telling us of Geneva in 1917.

"Just before mid-day, my phone rang. A most heavily accented voice was on the line," said Allen Dulles, "a man who wanted a responsible American official to speak to.

'Verantwortlich,' was the word he used. He gave his speech in the worst German. One of those importuners, I decided. Someone with a tale of petty woe bound to tell it in the worst accent possible.

"Now, the only American official at the Embassy that morning who happened to be remotely Verantwortlich was myself. Was I going to play tennis with a lovely English girl, or was I going to eat sauerkraut with some Russian emigre?

He paused. "Tennis won out. I never saw the fellow."

We waited.

"Too late, I learned who the man happened to be. The voice with the dreadful German accent, frantic to talk to a

responsible American official, was none other than Mr. V.I. Lenin himself. Not long after our phone call, the Germans sent Mr. Lenin across Bavaria, Prussia, Poland, and Lithuania in a sealed train. He arrived at the Finland Station in Leningrad to bring off in November of the same year nothing less than the Bolshevik Revolution." He paused, giving us sanction to become hilarious at the size of Allen Dulles' miscue.

"Al," a voice cried out, "how could you do that to the team?"

It was my first glimpse of Dix Butler. His face was unforgettable. His head, his massive jaw, his neck, his full mouth were as strongly formed as the features in a Roman bust.

Dulles looked pleased. "Profit by my error, gentlemen," he said. "Reread your Sherlock Holmes. The most trivial clue can prove the most significant. When you are on duty, therefore, observe every detail. Do the damnedest fine job you can do. You'll never know when the shovel turns up an unexpected gem."

He canted his pipe back into his mouth, parted the stage curtains, and disappeared.

Our next speaker offered business. Burns, Raymond James "Ray Jim" Burns, case officer: Japan, Latin America, Vienna. He would be our instructor in an eight-week course on World

Communism. He was also captain of the pistol team at Plans. He would, he told us, welcome anyone interested in improving their aim.

A man of medium height, he was there for us to study. He had short reddish-brown hair, a trim build, and regular features with an unforgiving twist. His mouth was a short straight cut. He was wearing a brown jacket, a white shirt, a narrow brown tie, light pink-khaki trousers and sun glasses shaded brown. His belt had three narrow horizontal stripes, brown, tan, and brown. His shoes were brown and cream and as pointed as his nose. He wore a heavy ring on his left hand and clicked it on the podium for emphasis. He had one decoration--a maple-leaf pin in his buttonhole, a spot of gold. I was feeling full of Mr. Dulles' adjuration to observe each detail.

Ray Jim hated Communists! He stood on the podium fixing us with his eyes. They were bullet-brown, a deep lead brown, near to black, a hole impinging on you. He looked us over one by one.

"There's a tendency these days," said Burns, "to give a little leeway to the Communists. Khrushchev is not as bad as Stalin, you're going to hear that. Of course, Khrushchev was called The Butcher of the Ukraine in his earlier days, but he's

not as bad as Stalin. Who could be as ruthless as Iosef Djugashvili, alias Joe Stalin, the purge-master? In the USSR they have a secret police that has no parallel to us, no comparison. It's as if you boiled the FBI, the Agency, and the state and federal prison systems into one big super-equivalent of the CIA, but lawless, unrestrained, ruthless! Their police--some of whom are even supposed to be in Intelligence--are kept busy purging millions of their own poor citizens, sending hordes of them by the million out to Siberia to die under forced labor and near starvation. Their crime? They believe in God. In the Soviet Union, you can slice up your grandmother before they'll rate your crime on a par with believing in the Lord Almighty. For the Soviet think-police know how the force of God stands in their way, resisting all those Red dreams of world conquest. To that purpose, the Red devotes his evil genius. You can't begin to conceive of what we are up against, so don't try to understand Communists by the measure of your own experience. Communists are ready to subvert any idea, or organization which is a free expression of the human will. Communists look to invade every cranny of every person's private activity. They are a cancer loose in the world. Human society can die of such a cancer since the aim is to seep into every pore of democratic life. I say to

you: Be prepared to fight a silent war against an often invisible enemy. Before you are done with this orientation course, you will be on the road to defusing their attempts to confuse world opinion. You will be able to counter-attack subversion and brain-washing. You are going to come out of your training as different men"--he peered about--"and, seeing as they rationed me to one joke--two different women."

We laughed that he had been good enough to release the tension, and then we stood up to cheer him. He was one of us. He was not, like Mr. Dulles, a little above the fray, but one of us. Since Ray Jim was dedicated, we, too, could aspire to such clarity of purpose.

Of course, I was not taking close account of myself. Mr. Dulles was much nearer to my understanding. Ray Jim came out of that vast middle of America which goes from west of the Hudson out to Arizona; that huge tract which, in comparison to the neatly tended garden of my education, was a roadless desert. I did not wish to say to myself that I did not know my own country. That is so lonely a condition, I was leaping to my feet and applauding a man on the assumption I was neighbor to his vision.

In the heat of the standing ovation we gave Mr. Burns, we were administered the Vow. Standing under the grand seal of

the CIA (which was in the center of the proscenium arch) our hands upraised, we were inducted formally and legally into the Agency, and swore not to speak without permission of what we learned, now and forever.

That is a solemn vow. I have been told of Masons, inactive for years, who will nonetheless impart not one detail of the rites of the fraternity, not even to their sons. Some equivalent of that fidelity must have entered us. My fear of retribution was lashed at that moment to my sense of honor. I might just as well have been commingling my blood with another warrior's palm. A sacred (and sweet) pang of emotion came to me on this instant of induction. If not for the perils of hyperbole, I could say my soul stood to attention.

This vow, you may be certain, was not diminished by our training. It constrains my mind to describe the awesome loyalty which soon developed. To give away our secrets was to betray God! A mighty syllogism! The substance of this oath has still not been corroded by close to thirty years in the Agency. Of my own actions, I will tell a good deal. I will break through--if need be--but I still feel inhibition at discussing our seminars in the use of such agents of influence abroad as could be found among native lawyers, journalists, trade unionists and statesmen. I will certainly not try to

allure of tradecraft. Is there any state more agreeable than living like a wicked angel?

Well, I had far to go. Let me demonstrate.

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About four weeks after I took the Vow, I had become so marooned in the repetitions of Raymond James Burns course in World Communism that I made the mistake of yawning in class.

"Hubbard, am I boring you?" Ray Jim asked.

"No, sir."

"I'd like to hear you repeat what I've just said."

I could feel my father's temper stir in me. "Look, Mr. Burns," I said, "I'm not bored. I get it. I know the Communists are treacherous, and double-dealing, and use agent

provocateurs to try to subvert our labor unions and work double time to befuddle world opinion. I know they have millions of men in their armies getting ready for world domination, but I have to wonder one thing. . ."

"Shoot," he said.

"Well, is every Communist a son of a bitch? I mean, are none of them human? Isn't there one of them somewhere down the line who likes to get drunk just for the fun, say, of getting drunk. Do they always have to have a reason for what they're doing?"

I could feel by the shift in the class that I was by now marooned in Harry-Hubbard-Land, population: 1. "You've told us," I went on, "that the Communists condition people to the point where they can only receive approved ideas. Well, I don't really believe what I'm going to say next, but for the sake of argument,"--I was obviously preparing a graceful exit--"would you say that we're receiving something of the same nature, although different in degree, and, of course, democratic, because I can speak in freedom without reprisals."

"We're here," said Ray Jim, "to sharpen your instincts and your faculties of critical reasoning. That is the opposite of brain-washing. Specious political reasoning is what we're on the lookout for. Find it and uproot it." He was striking the

palm of one hand on the back of the other. "Now, I like your example," he said. "It shows critical faculties. Just carry them further. I'm willing to accept the idea that there's a dedicated Communist here and there who might get a hardon without Party approval, but I'll tell you this. Before long, he's got to decide. Is it his career, or his dick?"

The class laughed with him. "Hubbard," he stated, "you can put all of the Soviet people into three categories. Those who have been in a slave-camp, those who are in slave-camp now, and those who are waiting to go."

I now rejoined the fold by saying, "Thank you, sir."

One night at the canal-house, I brought it up with Hugh Montague. He didn't take long to reply. "Of course the question is more complex than good stalwarts like old Ray Jim would have you know. Why, we're debriefing a Soviet defector right now who's obsessed with one fellow he destroyed, a silly drunk whom he'd encourage to booze up in some black hole of a bar in Siberia. So much anti-Soviet sentiment was milked out of the drunk that not only the poor wretch, but all of his family, were sent off to a camp. All of them harmless. But our defector had a quota of arrests to make, in the same way New York police are given parking tickets to hand out. It revolted him. A human Communist, so to speak."

"Let me ask a stupid question," I started. "Why are Communists so awful?"

"Yes," he said. "Why?" He nodded. "It's very Russian to be awful. Peter the Great once beached a small fleet of his on the bank of some large lake in Pereslavl. Then he didn't go back to the place for thirty years. Of course, his beautiful boats were now not now as spanking new as the czar remembered. Sad. They had just about rotted out on the muddy lake-shore. Peter's rage is captured in a formal document. 'You, the governors of Pereslavl,' went his pronunciamento, 'shall preserve these ships, yachts, and galleys. Should you neglect this obligation,'"--here Harlot's voice rose in imitation of his idea of Peter the Great--"'you, and your descendants, will stand to answer.'"

He nodded. "Extreme, would you say?"

I nodded.

"Normal. That is, normal to the pre-Christian tribal and peasant view of things. Christ not only brought love into the world, but civilization, with all its dubious benefits."

"I don't follow you."

"Well, as I believe I told you once, Christ adjured us to forgive the son for the sins of the father. That's amnesty. It opened the scientific world. Prior to this divine largesse,

how might a man dare to be a scientist? He would be playing games with the natural universe. Any error which proved an insult to nature could bring disaster down on his family.

"The Russians are spiritual, as every Russian will rush to tell you, but their Greek Orthodoxy gagged on that gift from Christ. It would have wrecked the tribal foundations. Forgive the sons? Never. Not in Russia. The punishment must remain greater than the crime. Now, they want to march forward into technology land, and they can't. They're too spooked. Deathly afraid of terrible curses from Mother Nature. If you sin against nature, your sons will perish with you. No wonder Stalin was a total paranoid."

"In that case," I said, "the Russians ought to be easy to overcome."

"Easy," said Harlot, "if the retarded parts of the Third World have a true wish to enter civilization. I'm not sure they do. Backward countries may dream of cars and dams, and rush to pave their swamps, but it's half-hearted. The other half still clings to pre-Christian realms--awe, paranoia, slavish obedience to the leader, Divine punishment. The Soviets feel like kin to them. Don't sneer altogether at Bullseye Burns. It is awful over there in the Soviet. Just today a paper crossed my desk about a sect of twelve poor

Doukhobors who were rounded up in some alley of an outlying town in some poor half-forgotten province. The present Soviet leaders know the potential power in a dozen starved clerks and workers. Lenin and Stalin and Trotsky and Bukharin and Zinoviev, all of that top layer, were also a rag-tag circle once of impoverished clerks. In consequence, the KGB doesn't cut down the sapling--it looks to extirpate the seed. That has huge effect. Suppose I hand you a six-chamber Colt with one round in it, spin the barrel and say, 'Now for Russian roulette.' The chances in your favor are five to one as you pull the trigger, but in your heart it will feel no better than even money. Indeed, you probably expect to die. Dittò with extreme punishment. Let it fall on twelve, and twelve million will shiver. Bullseye Burns is not so far off the mark."

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After eight weeks of Mr. Burns' course in the Recreation and Services Building on The Communist Party: Its Theory and Tactics, I could offer exposition on the organization and tactics of the Comintern, the Cominform, the Cheka, the GPU, the NKVD, and the KGB in each of its twelve directorates. If the material required memorization of long, inhospitable lists, be certain I devoted the same concentration a medical student gives to his lectures out of the unholy fright that should he fail to store away one item, a future patient might perish. It

week of stiff workouts, my mind, imbibing all this input, felt stiff and sore and glowing with new sensation. I thought the change of name itself ought to be enough to alter one's character--ZJ/REPULSE should call for a different personality than MX/LIGHT--my thoughts took sensuous turns. Perhaps it was the unchanging state of my sexual virginity, but I was now so pervasively libidinous that pleasure could even be taken in such courses as locks and picks, flaps and seals, or reversibles. Best of all was the mnemotechnic we were provided for recalling telephone numbers. Sentiments of buried wealth soon streamed into strange corners of my psyche. My life was setting out on a voyage into the phenomenology of secret worlds, and some part of my libido must have travelled along in thrall.

Let me give evidence. If exaggerated, forgive me. I was very young. I loved, for example, flaps and seals, that is, unsealing letters. Methods ranged from using a teakettle spout, all the way over to highly classified chemical swabs. Either way, I enjoyed the moment when the flap, supposedly protecting inviolable contents, relaxed its grip. The small sound elicited by that act made me think of panties being pulled down from a woman's mound, a private reaction, you would expect, but the instructor was ahead of me. "Ever hear of the

impact, would be laid upon one. Finally, we were put into competition: Our winner managed to write down nine of ten numbers. (I was, by the way, that winner--which still provides a freshet of recollected glory.)

I digress. My point is that this technique, while full of tension in class, turned agreeable on the edge of sleep. The seven digits of any telephone number could dissolve into a miniscule boudoir.

Let me explain: We were assigned a specific color to each number. White represented zero; yellow was 1; green equalled 2; blue, 3; purple, 4; red, 5; orange, 6; brown, 7; gray, 8; black, 9.

We were instructed to visualize a wall, a table, and a lamp. If the first three digits of the telephone number were 586, we were to picture a red wall, behind a gray table on which was sitting an orange lamp. For the succeeding four numbers, we might visualize a person in a purple jacket, green pants, and yellow shoes sitting on an orange chair. That was our mental notation for 4216.

586-4216 had been converted into a picture with seven colored objects. Today, it is worse; the area code has to be added. Now, the room has a window to look out on sky, water, and earth, a woe my class did not suffer. I think of brown

sky, red water and blue earth for the area code 753, a bad day for Gauguin! We learned our stuff, however, in 1955, and so had to visualize no more at the sound of 436-9940, than a purple wall, a blue table, and an orange lamp. Our faceless figure--Rollo S. Bell became his name--sits in the purple room with the blue table and the orange lamp; Rollo is wearing a black jacket, black pants, and purple shoes as he installs himself on his white chair, and this provides us with 436-9940. It seems like the long way around, but I became so proficient at these equivalents (and their adaptations for street addresses, and precise time of rendezvous) that I saw hues so soon as I heard numbers. I also envisaged Rollo as a woman, and that helped. She was waiting for me; sexual ambition is not complex in the young.

We were taught to use invisible inks which reminded me of my mother: Jessica Silverfield Hubbard could entertain a dinner table on the joys and disappointments of a season's ballet, while exchanging other points of view below the table. Secret inks.

We can skip over lock-picking. Those simple but elegant swages we employed are still marked SECRET, and for a Junior Officer Trainee like myself, able to find sexual stir in the flap of an envelope, what was to be said for cracking a door?

to play with the macabre option that these poor employees had been blinded as a prerequisite to gaining work here, a fantastical conceit lopsided enough to haunt one's mood. Of course, I knew it was not true, but I suspect the subterranean solemn force of codes had a great deal to do with my uneasiness at being served by the blind.

Let me move on to a more agreeable subject. Anyone who has read a spy novel is familiar with dead-drops, but active instruction is another matter. All twenty-three of us left our home-room, and filed down the corridor past the bulletin board notices to the men's lavatory where, predictably, ritual jokes were offered to the lone woman-trainee in our class; she, in ritual repayment, was good enough to blush. For that matter, I felt my own cheeks reddening. (I was uncomfortably aware of the unabashed odor coming up from the open standing urinals.) 1955 is a long time ago.

Our first dead drop! The instructor took a handful of paper towels out of the metal dispenser by the sink, removed a roll of 16mm Minox film, the size of a thimble, from his vest pocket, put it in the dispenser, and replaced the towels. In turn, to much laughter, each of us repeated the act. The laughter derived, I believe, from how quickly a few of us could accomplish it, and how slow were the others. Soon, the paper

towels were hopelessly mangled. Admonished to practice on our own, we were then shown other possibilities to be extracted from this same rest-room, the most elegant of which was, no doubt, the cardboard cylinder at the core of the toilet-paper roll. Such dead-drops, we were assured, were only suitable when the contact could make rendezvous soon after.

Brush-drops, therefore, were preferable. They posed no question of whether the exchange had taken place.

For brush-drops, we were brought on a field tour to the aisles of a Washington D.C. supermarket. Having enriched my shopping basket with a can of Campbell's Tomato Soup and a pound of Armour's Hickory Smoked Bacon, I bumped into my assigned mate, and in the course of such collision, managed to drop a roll of film into his basket, after which, exchanging apologies, we moved on.

Any housewife looking up from her cart would have seen in these aisles, usually empty at mid-morning hour, packed with a platoon of men bumping vigorously into one another, while occasionally whispering, "No, you hacker, it's my turn." What can I add? The brush was electric. One expected sparks to jump from basket to basket.

Later that night we were taken on a tour of a private estate beyond Chevy Chase to be given instruction in the use of

dead-drops. That is, delayed-action exchanges. Of course, the dead-drop had to respect the agent's style of living. If he liked to take daily walks in the country, then we looked for a loose brick in a garden wall, a hollow stump, or a split in a dead elm. I became aware of the cavernous recesses in a tree trunk. Groping about in the dark of the estate forest, I remember how hairy the crevice seemed. I felt as if I were slipping my hand and forearm up the loose sleeve of a huge black man. What a transaction! I could not find the film at first, and when I did, whipped my hand out so quickly as to draw a remonstrance from the instructor, "Casual, buddy, keep the thing casual."

I conclude my necessarily limited account of this period of early training around the Reflecting Pool on the Mall in Washington in 1955 by saying that on the last night Bullseye Burns and his wife threw a party for our class in his small apartment in a newly built four-story complex of middle-cost housing out in the outskirts of Alexandria, Virginia. He had three kids, all boys, all tow heads, and I learned on this night that he and his wife were high school sweethearts from Indiana, and that the casserole dish of cheese and tuna and hot dog relish that she served us had been her party fare for twenty years. (Or, as she called it--her "main-eventer.") It

was obvious that she and Ray Jim hardly bothered to speak to one another any more. She was plain-faced, slightly heavy, slab-shaped. Like a foreigner, getting insight into Americans from the Mid-West and the Southwest, it seemed to me that people like Jim Ray did not quit their marriage unless feeling overly inclined to take an axe to their mate.

So, I was surprised at how good the casserole tasted. While it didn't, somehow it did. We were eating in the fold of the Vow and drinking what Ray Jim called, "My favorite Italian red ink. It's my favorite because it's cheap."

A Junior Officer Trainee named Murphy, drunk on beer, started to jibe at Bullseye Burns. "All right, sir," he said, "for eight weeks you have given us JOT's a lot of hints about of how we dispose of spooks in special circumstances."

"Yessir," said Ray Jim, the arm holding his glass now suddenly as stiff as erectile tissue.

"Well, sir, to satisfy our ravenous class curiosity, did you ever personally have to pull the plug on one of said individuals?"

"Decline comment."

"Never had to call on your Browning?" asked Murphy. "Not even once?"

"Policy is against drastic termination," Burns stated. "Individual solutions cannot be wholly disallowed." He made a point of staring straight ahead.

"I get it," said Murphy, making a pistol of his forefinger and fist. "Pyng, pyng," he said, offering two shots. I was one of the men who made the mistake of laughing.

"You got it," said Burns, but we were not to get away unmarked. After supper, he took out a tin box from which he extracted bits of note paper one by one. "I collect," he said, "doodles from the work desks of the Junior Officer Trainees. I recommend their study." He held one up, squinted, and said, "This is Murphy's. Shows he is impulsive."

By now, a lot of us were drunk on mixtures of beer and vino tinto, and we jeered at Murphy, who would punch hallway walls in the YMCA when he got drunk.

"This is Schultz's. Schultz, are you ready?"

"Yessir."

"Your doodle tells me what I know already."

"Yessir. What is it, sir?"

"You, Schultz, are tight as a tick."

It was my turn next.

"Hubbard, your doodle is one hell of a dilly."

"Yessir."

"It shows that you are up to something difficult."

"What, sir?" I made the mistake of asking.

"You are engaged in the attempt to fly up your asshole."

I think he had time to offer his kind verdict on ten more of us before my pulse rate came back to me. On to the Farm!

On the weekend leave before the commencement of field training at Camp Peary, I went up to New York to see a Mount Holyoke girl who was in town for Easter vacation, but she wasn't free, so I took my mother out to lunch at the Edwardian Room of the Plaza.

I do not know if it is a reflection of how complex was our relation, nor how superficial, but my mother and I were certainly not close and I never confided in her. Yet she had that delicate power which often belongs to lovely and

immaculately groomed blonde women. I was always aware of pleasing or displeasing her, and such critical emanations were usually transmitted to me in the first glance she took of my person. She could not bear unattractive people; she was generous to those who pleased her eye.

On this noon, we were off to a bad start. She was furious; she had not heard a word from me in two months. I had not told her I was in the Agency. Her animosity toward my father, a dependable reaction in a loose and caterwauling world, suggested that I not advertise how closely I was following his example. In any case, I was not supposed to inform her. Theoretically, one's wife, one's children, and one's parents were to be told no more than that one did "government work."

Since she would see immediately through such a phrase, I presented her instead with vague talk of an importing job I had taken on in South America. In fact, I was actually looking forward to using some of the Company's more exotic mail routing facilities for sending her an occasional post card from Valparaiso or Lima.

"Well, for how long are you planning to be there?" she asked.