

She is all right, I tell you. In another week, she will be splendid. Of course, she must not work for a few months, and has to forswear in future any ingestion of substances whatever. It's her ambition, don't you see? That's the only part of the girl which is not balanced. They don't recognize the stature of her work. That's enough to drive any sane mind wild."

"May I speak to Kittredge?"

"She is sleeping. I would not wake her."

"May I call back?"

There was a full pause. I waited, but he did not reply.

"Is Christopher with you?" I asked.

"Naturally."

"And a nurse?"

"A good Maine woman who comes in by the day. I get up with Christopher if he wakes at night."

I wanted to ask about his office. I wondered how he could remove himself. Who would cover? Kittredge had once spoken of two assistants who were absolutely dependable. They would be guarding the doors at GHOU. For a man I worshipped as if he were halfway up the ladder to the Lord, I was now recognizing once more how little I knew about Hugh Montague. I had a thousand questions, and the small but inescapable panic that

not one would be answered. Time on the phone was running out. I would be alone in Uruguay so soon as he hung up.

"May I call later?" I asked again.

The telephone silence, teeming with static, took on its own small horror as if this electronic clatter was the last cry of a myriad of infinitesimal creatures.

"Harry, look into yourself," said Harlot. "You've been a son of a bitch."

"Oh, no," I said.

"I want your correspondence with Kittredge to cease."

I could never decide whether self-interest was part of God's design for us, or the sure sign of a low devil but my first thought now--sentiments of loss to follow later--was whether he had read the letters, or merely knew of their existence.

"Dear God, Hugh," I said at last, "I think that ought to be Kittredge's decision when she feels better." Even as I spoke, the scent of Sally Porringer returned like a visitation.

"In my mind, Harry, her letters to you are about equal to those substances she took for a better comprehension of her work. She now sees the need to simplify her life. The birth of a baby is as incapacitating to an ambitious talented woman

as the deep wound of a spear. She needs to mend. So, forswear the correspondence. That is my wish and it is hers."

"I'm going to ask for a leave."

"You won't get it, and, in any event, I wouldn't permit you to see her."

"I don't know if I can take that. I'm six thousand miles away."

"Well, you're going to discover how tough you are. My uneasiest sentiment, now that we are perforce joined by truth for a moment or two, is that you, Harry, are not tough enough. Not for the life work you have chosen. Prove me wrong. Plunge into your job, and take a sabbatical from us until we come around."

With that, he hung up. I stood looking at the key to the secure phone. I had been holding it in my hand all the while we spoke.

you. The figure was something for Saturday. It is a fair sample.

It was nice, however, that someone was asking for me. In the month after that last letter from Kittredge, I had been so fully in a cold fury, enraged at her betrayal, that as I wrote her up, I held Sally responsible. So I concluded in calm. That seemed to wait as my answer to her. I also wrote her, in my love at myself. Which cost me sleep. I could easily with all its iron-fisted fingers kept clenching something that I could better have done with. I thought it necessary for a man as young as myself to be that principled with his emotions. Couldn't I just look like other Americans? Porringer and Cathy were always ready to you with people's histories of their rights in Montevideo brotherhood. It was with his

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Since it was near my hotel, I continued the habit of stopping by the Central Post Office each morning on the way to work. While I knew there would be no more letters from Kittredge, I had begun to use the box for other people. My mother now wrote to me there and old college friends. Once in a while, Sally Porringer would leave a note although I did not encourage that. Her letters, as one could anticipate, were functional--"Oh, Harry, I miss you so much, I'm just aching for

you. Let's figure out something for Saturday," is a fair sample.

It was nice, however, that someone was aching for me. In the month after that last letter from Kittredge, I made love to Sally in a cold fury, enraged at her because, try as I might not to, I held Sally responsible. So I copulated in hate. That seemed to melt an icy moraine in her. I also made love in icy fury at myself. Which cost me dear. Sexual vanity with all its iron-tipped fingers kept clawing something forth I could better have used within. I thought it unseemly for a man as young as myself to be that preoccupied with his soul--why couldn't I just fuck like other Americans? Porringer and Gatsby were always ready to regale you with capsule histories of their nights in Montevideo brothels. If Sherman with his wife, two children, and all of the duties of a Deputy COS, could still disport "like the happiest hog on the hind-tit," as he put it himself, somber, blue-cheeked, paranoid Porringer, why then could I not let go? Porringer even bragged that he had induced the prettiest whore in the oldest brothel in Montevideo, established in the Old City over, lo, these eighty years, an emporium full of chandeliers and walnut-panelled walls darkened twice, once by wood-stain and again by age, to--yes, Porringer had, yes, induced the prettiest whore to

take him on a trip at no added expense around la orilla del mundo, which even when translated as the rim of the world made no sense to me until he added, "Licked my ass, buddy." That put me on the tip of my tongue not to say, "As well as your wife?" but I could not. There was one bit of loyalty to Sally. The paradox of sex is that it always negotiates some kind of contract with love--no matter what, love and sex will never be entirely without relations. If I had added to my clandestine jamborees with Sally all the anger I felt at exercising my brains right out of my head with the wrong girl, and so felt more and forever more separated from the only woman I could adore like a goddess--strong words, but I was suffering my loss--all my anger had nonetheless to live with my sexual greed. The unruly churn of loss left me feeling like a displaced person in the land of love.

So love slipped over, if only by a little, into my feelings, and I did not despise Sally quite so much, and had compassion for the awful loneliness of her life in a land where the only people who understood her at all were maniacal old lady bridge players, and her young, grim and much detached lover, not to mention a husband who understood her so well he did not comprehend her at all. "He thinks it makes me feel all right," she complained once, "when he announces to company,

'Oh, Sally's a good old girl,' as if I was his 4-H Blue Ribbon in the prize sow contest. I hate Sherman sometimes. He's so needful and inconsiderate," and she began to weep. I, holding her, felt the first beginnings of compassion move out from me and into her. I still looked upon her with a great measure of contempt, but there were limits to how long I could keep the chalice of tender compassion reserved entirely for Kittredge when I ached within from every bruise she had bestowed.

Besides, it was too hard to think of her. Was she mad? I would have visions as I entered my dreams, of such theatrical intensity that I thought of them as tableaux. I would see Kittredge reciting Ophelia's last demented speech. There was not a night when I did not curse myself for failing to get leave to go back to America. Yet I knew it would be hopeless. Harlot was never less of a man than his word. If the aura of our concern could circumnavigate the globe, why, then, Harlot might be right. One's duty was to suck up the slack and content oneself with whatever good wishes could be transmitted to the Colossus of the North.

How treacherous I felt toward Kittredge each time Sally and I put in two good and raunchy hours together. How I brooded about sex with Sally as it grew more appealing despite myself. I knew all the woe of feeling the first mists of

compassion toward a woman I swore I would never love. And would lie in Sally's arms afterward thinking of Kittredge, wondering if she were on the mend, or had I, across six thousand miles, just sent another thundering blow to the head?

Suck up the slack, indeed. I felt like a strip miner through all of May and June. The mild winter of Montevideo might as well have been spent in the gray rock-like cold of an Eastern coal-pit. I was alone in Uruguay for the first time, with no one from America there in my mind to talk to. So I took on work as Harlot had advised, saw Chevi Fuertes twice a week, and AV/ALANCHE once, AV/OUCH 1 and 2 at Travel Control and Passport Control were on my route, and AV/ERAGE, the homosexual journalist on the society beat, was also given to me now that Gatsby had been put onto Porringer's old trade union contacts. And there was always the Bosqueverdes (who spent their winter photographing the passage of live souls in and out of the Soviet Embassy gate.) They were mine. The cryptonym of the Bosqueverdes might be AV/IARY, but their Station nickname was GOGOL. GOGOL would never meet GHOUL. And Howard Hunt gave me Gordy Morewood as well, and I had to deal with his unrelenting demands for cash and his impeccable sense of when to push and when to pull away. He had an agent he called AV/ANTGARDE, a most mysterious AV/ANTGARDE, an intimate of

President Luis Batlle. So Gordy claimed. He would not let us hear that agent's identity. Which inflamed every quiet determination in Howard Hunt to have a Station well-run, nicely-controlled. Here was a rogue hair across his eyeball. "I'm going to find out who AV/ANTGARDE is," Hunt told me, and deputied Porringer to push Peones into obtaining a copy of President Batlle's daily log. If AV/ANTGARDE was a great intimate of the President, then his name must come up in the log many times. "Periodicity can solve our problem here," said Hunt.

The log, however, was not easy to obtain. Peones was conceivably in position to copy such a log, but not in excellent position. Porringer and Hunt would get into disputes at least once a week on whether Porringer was pushing Peones sufficiently. "I will not abuse an agent's organic potential," was Porringer's predictable reply. "You can put my man in a big sweat, but he still won't be able to get it."

"Sweat cooks more meat than fat," said Hunt, which was so dubious a metaphor that we kept it to amuse ourselves when things were going wrong. On certain mornings, every face was an irritant. Sometimes when Porringer and Kearns and Gatsby were all together in our big office room with its four desks, I

knew again how faceless were everyday faces. And how intimate!
Every misgrown nostril hair!

Hunt became my friend during that Uruguayan winter which was the summer of 1957 in North America. Two months after I spoke across six thousand miles to Harlot up at the Keep in Maine, I was wending my way out to Carrasco twice a week for dinner with Dorothy and Howard. If the high regard I used to hold for Harlot was now buried like provisions one might return to after many a long march, the shadow of that love, (or was it the ghost overlay?) became transferred to Hunt. If he had a nasty temper, and was as easy to dislike at one moment as to like the next, he was still my leader. I was also discovering that we attach parts of our capacity for love to such formal investments as flag and office. He was the leader of my team, and thereby twice installed.

In the midst of all this, on an average cold morning while following my habit of stopping at the Central Post Office on the way to work, I pulled my hand out of the box one day with a letter from Kittredge.

June 30, 1957

Dear Harry,

Just a short note, but I've been concerned about you.

I'm now all right. In fact, in a limited sense I'm thriving. The baby is off my breast and onto formula, which, on balance, works. I tell you this in modest sorrow, but it is to everyone's advantage, and we have a daily nurse-housekeeper inasmuch as I am back on the job. No one over at the shop knows I was ill. Hugh managed that with great dispatch. Allen may know, but not Helms, and certainly no one else. Hugh just brazened it through with a Kittredge-and-I-haven't-had-a-vacation-since-marriage sort of stance that only he could get away with. Of course, he did work at the Keep last summer. And damn hard. For that matter, he also worked on this last trip while I was sorting the little mad things out for myself. Don't repeat this, but the real trouble was not you, nor the brooch, nor the baby, nor Hugh, all of whom and which I was beginning to see as encircling fiends, but, in fact, was due to the most injudicious experimenting with a fabulous if horribly tricky drug for altering consciousness called LSD. Very hush-hush. We've been using it the last five or six years at TSS with the most fascinating but inconclusive results, and I was vain enough to decide to experiment with it on myself and

try to trace LSD's impact on Alpha and Omega. Needless to say.

. . .

So, this letter is apology to you. I recollect just enough of my deep dive to be certain it was unforgiveable. I've wanted to tell you for some time but didn't quite dare to use your old box number for fear it was given up. I didn't want a letter to you returning here for Hugh to see. He's forbidden me to write to you and he's correct up to a point. I think I was indulging a species of double-life. Chaste vis-a-vis you and me, but nonetheless double. I vowed to Hugh I would not write again to one Harry Hubbard without discussing it with him first. Of course, I crossed my fingers as I said it, which means the vow is discounted by ten per cent--this letter. Anyway, as you see, I decided to take the chance.

It is really to tell you, as I have already said, that I am all right. In truth, I love Hugh now more than ever. He was fabulous to me up in Maine, strong but so concerned. I realized how much he loves me and the baby and I hadn't really known that before. Hadn't truly taken it in. The spring of his love must come from a source one thousand feet deep. I think without him I might have sunk into much more loss of time and frantic mindlessness.

This is also to tell you that I miss you and your letters. I'm patient. I will wait another three or four months to prove to Hugh that relapses are not in my ken, not at all. I'm back, but still I want to demonstrate it to him, and by Fall--your Spring--I am going to tell him that I want to write to you again, and if he doesn't permit it--well, we'll see--clandestine fevers come, I sometimes think, from reading the Bard at too early an age--which has to be the tumultuous fact of my childhood. Macbeth at the age of eight. Yes, we'll see. Be patient.

Think of me as your cousin, your kissing cousin, with whom you cannot have congress. Whoopee! Hélas. I will always love you on a most special note, but it feels warm and comfy right now, I confess, to think of you as far-off.

Amitiés,

Kittredge

P.S. Hugh never saw any of your letters. I confessed to him that we had been corresponding, but only as college sweethearts who were not about to do anything about it. That he could tolerate because he had seen as much when you would visit. So, my confession confirmed his acumen, and he could accept it. I

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Even when there were only the three of us for dinner, our setting was formal. At their long handsome table, Howard always sat at one end and Dorothy at the other, myself in the center flanked by silver candlestands. They had a cook and an upstairs-downstairs maid who did the serving. I can never remember passing a dish.

Howard could be expansive at larger dinners, and on those occasions one saw a good deal more candlelight; the Hunts were never short of impressive silver to post their tapers. His

preference, however, seemed to be for our sma'l evenings. Perhaps he felt himself at a turn in his life. Born in 1918, he was still a year away from forty, and saw himself as having done well. Still, the life, as he would be the first to inform you, had rocked along at quite a pace. I believe he felt peppy but battered, cocksure, when not insecure, or so I assessed him. It was considerably different from dining with Harlot who had never for a moment pondered my opinion of him.

Hunt wanted me to like him, and I was prepared to. Before Kittredge broke silence, the Hunts were all I had in the way of reasonably good company, but now, with the promise of correspondence to resume in the Fall, I began again to see Howard through the focus of letters I might compose; I grew mixed in my feelings. I could think of Harlot with awe in the morning and so not value Hunt, only to reverse my sentiments over wine and dinner. Howard treated me as if I were important. If Kittredge was right, and he and Dorothy were absolute snobs, I was learning nonetheless that they are not the worst people to have for friends. To be accepted by a snob is not unlike receiving an award; one feels bathed in balmy waters. If his evening with the Montagues still smarted like vinegar in Howard's nostrils, all the more appealing was I, not only for the Hubbard ancestors, but as someone to steal from

the Montagues forever. Howard did not yet comprehend the impossibility of certain social desires. I believe one reason I liked him was that I often felt equal to him.

Of course, I paid for these attentions back at the office. My working convention with the Hunts, precisely to forestall envy, was that I should bring the day's reports out to him in the evening whenever he had spent the afternoon hobnobbing with Uruguayans at the Jockey Club. I had not been doing it for long before Porringer and crew arrived at the intelligence that I was a steady guest for dinner. On nights when I was out on one or another of my functions as a case officer, Gatsby or Kearns or even Oatsie himself would take the twelve mile drive along the Rambla out to Carrasco Beach where the Hunts lived in a white stucco villa with red roofed tiles just two sweepingly curved streets away from the sea. No Porringer, Kearns, or Gatsby was casually asked to stop for dinner. They had been given their one statutory repast with spouse at the home of the Chief of Station, but that was all they were going to get from Howard and Dorothy. Kindness to social inferiors was not one of Dorothy's virtues. I winced at the thought of Sally in her clutches. Sherman, at least, was made from hide of rhinoceros. Nor was the thought of Kearns any happier. He had the tiniest wife and they looked bizarre when together.

Chandernagore, which happened to be, Howard could tell you with no hitch in pronunciation, the family seat of the de Goutières. "It's near Calcutta."

I never knew if the de Goutières were Franco-Hindu or Indo-French, and if I heard the sound of Marquesa from time to time, I did not know how to spell it. But allow Dorothy her due--she was aristocratic. With dark hair, large dark eyes, a rather large and aquiline nose, and lips that could curve into many a nuance of displeasure, she was curiously attractive--I attribute it to how Dorothy carried herself. She was not lacking in inner sentiments of self-worth.

Provided with such virtues and shortfalls at the home of the Hunts, I paid for my Chief's hospitality by absorbing a concomitant chill from my brother operators at the office. No matter. I accepted the transaction. I was learning so much about the Station. While dinners in Carrasco adhered to Dorothy's edict that no outright business could be transacted at table, the half hour before dinner, invariably installed me in Howard's study where he would use me as a sounding board. Back at our Embassy wing he reviewed at least once a week all Station activities in open meeting; in the Carrasco study I would be provided with the sub-text. An audible meditation, minutes in length, would issue from the thriving hive of his

Communists send commercial telegrams too. Especially out of their Commercial Office. By the way, our telephone tap there is no longer functioning. Thank you very much, Barry Kearns. Let's have a fuck-up contest. You take Gatsby, Harry, I'll bet on Kearns. Do you know he's two weeks behind on those Urugu license plate readouts that Porringer got from Peones? Which brings me back to Sherman. He's doing a good job, but I'm debating. Should I put both of you on the same horse? Porringer needs help on AV/OWAL.

I would immediately perceive that this was the point of the last twenty minutes. Hunt had conducted me through each loose drum-skin in our Station, none of which I volunteered to tighten--the lower the level of performance on a mail job or Paraguayan leftist, the more certain was the work to be, in the main, nugatory--but AV/OWAL was a serious job. For Porringer was our liaison to each of the journalists and editors we employed in the Montevideo press to plant our pieces. There were days when the propaganda wars between Soviet contract journalists and ours heated up, as for example, in the middle of June just after Khrushchev stated that the USSR wished to seek disarmament. Our Uruguayan journalists had had to counter whatever sympathy was aroused for the Soviet Union in the local Uruguayan public. During one week, Hunt, Porringer, and myself

off all alien ears, "just how many American newspapers take plants from us that are wholly comparable to what we give these ding-dong Monte VD papers. Journalists are easier to buy than horses!" Now he looked judiciously at his desk drawer. "Kearns does a good job on monitoring the office, wouldn't you say?"

"I'm not competent to judge."

"He's A-OK as bug exterminator. Give the guy his due. Not exactly bolted down in other directions, but I trust him here. He goes over this house once a week."

"Find anything?"

"Not yet. What lazy bastards the Sovs are, once they get this far down below Mejico way. Which is just how I want them."

The maid knocked on the door of the study. It was time for dinner. End of business and commencement of history. Dorothy, who was considerably less talkative than Howard, was always ready to accept his monologues at table, and converted them, I expect, into periods of meditation for herself. After all, she had heard the tales.

I, however, had not, and thought he told them well. Let one suffice for the many.

"Back in Tokyo about two years ago. . ."

"More like a year and a half ago," commented Dorothy.

"You're keeper of the clock," said Howard. "All right, eighteen months ago, the Chinese Communists had the effrontery to announce that they were going to open their first trade fair in Japan. Show off their advanced machine-tool equipment. Well, this set up a hell of a ripple. We knew better, but still! What if they were competitive? American interests had a lot of ducats in the pot. We certainly didn't want the Japanese people looking to China instead of us. Well, we managed to slip into their so-called invitation-only preview and the ChiCom stuff was pathetic. Poor copies of our old machine tools, and the few good products were hand-crafted. They were going to make no dent in the bacon-and-beans department, no, sir, no Almighty Dollars to be spent competing with them, but still we wanted to bomb their exposition."

"Did you employ Who-Me's?" I asked.

"Hell, no. This job called for finesse. I speak of bombing in the most figurative sense. We pulled off a nifty op authored by me. Floated hundreds of thousands of leaflets down on Tokyo one night from a plane. 'Come to the Chinese Trade Fair,' said our leaflet, 'Free Admission, Free Beer, Free Rice, Free Sashimi.'"

Hunt began to laugh. "Harry, the ChiComs were inundated by Tokyo citizens waving these leaflets, and the Chinese had to close their doors. No admission. No free anything. Terrible press. The Chinese slunk their skinny butts out of town.

"Speak of Brownie points," said Howard. "I think one reason I'm sitting in a COS seat right now was the success of that coup. The trick, Harry, is get to the essential. Decide what hurts the opponent most. You won't find those specifications in the Doolittle Report, good as it is. This knock-out instinct is honed by field experience. Lansdale's a good example. True bang-juicer, only with finesse. He set Hanoi right on their heels. They thought they had the situation well in hand after Dien Bien Phu, but Lansdale got his agents into the major oil supply dump in Hanoi and succeeded in contaminating it. Surreptitiously. The Ho Chi Minh's didn't find out until their trucks broke down. Motors corroded."

Howard always extolled the virtue of St. Emilion '49, and I had been drinking my share of his cellar that evening.

"Howard, let me shoot for the moon," I said. "Is General Lansdale your rabbi?"

"That, my friend, is neither here nor there. Passons, passons." He lifted his glass to Dorothy. "Friend," he said,

"when you look at your hostess, I do not know what you see. .

."

"A beautiful lady. . ." I interjected.

"All of that," said Hunt, "but I also glimpse that mysterious emblem of the female persona at its most elusive. Ask yourself, Harry, would Dorothy make a spy?"

"None better," I replied.

"You could be on the nose." He sipped his wine. "I'm going to let one out I ought not to. While in Tokyo, she copped the Argentine code books for us."

"I'm impressed," I said to Dorothy.

"Well, Howard had to bring it up, but I will say it was no great feat. I was working, after all, for the Argentine Ambassador."

"Her Spanish is impeccable," said Howard. "She was his speech-writer."

"Part-time," said Dorothy.

"Part-time happened to be enough," said Howard, "for Dorothy to pick up the code books during the midday siesta while all the Argentine Embajaderos were sleeping. We had a little team around the corner who photographed those code books faster than you can skin a rabbit, then Dorothy returned them.

That was worth a private salute from the North Asia Command.
The lady took a real chance."

"Even if I'd been caught, what could anyone have done to me?"

"Just a jail sentence for theft, I expect," said Howard.
"No, darling, you are the real article. Why, if we hadn't gotten together, I would probably have met you in Hong Kong on some enchanted evening."

"And what would I have been doing there?"

"Probably running a large espionage mill. Contract players at every price. All nations welcome."

Dorothy said: "Pass the wine before you drink it all."

"Another bottle," said Howard.

"Could I buy a case of this St. Emilion in town?" I asked.

"Beware," Howard answered. "Mucho whackers. Rhymes with smackers."

"Wouldn't it be worth giving as gifts to some of our people?"

"You mean, the daily Urogos?"

"Yes, such folk."

Their cook-server was bringing in the new bottle, but Howard said, "Only at Pedro's level," a reference to Peones.

a throne in Hsien, North China; Hunt on a ski lift in Austria; Hunt with a brace of pheasants in Mexico; Hunt at the beach in Acapulco; Hunt in Hollywood, Hunt directing a documentary in Vienna for ECA; Hunt with antelope horns in Wyoming; Hunt with ram's horns in I don't know where--he grew tired of the tour before we got to Greece, Egypt, Guatemala, Japan. He gave a wave of dismissal to himself at the Acropolis, settled in one big leather chair, and obviously provident, was able to offer me its mate.

The more we drank, the more confidential he became. In a little while, he began to call me Hub. I could see a long career for Hub and quickly offered an explanation (which had no truth) that one of my twin brothers had such a nickname.

"Back to Harry," he said equably. "Good name, Harry."

"Thank you."

"What do you see for yourself, Harry, down the road?"

"Down the road?"

"Thirty years from now. Do you see a Director's chair, or is it fur-lined slippers on Retirement Lane?"

"I like this work. I learn something every day. I just want to get awfully good at it."

"No attacks of conscience?"

"A few, perhaps, but I'm in need of seasoning."

"Good. I've always liked the way you talk," said Howard and opened his desk drawer. "What I show you next is in whole confidence. Complete discretion on your part is called for."

"Yessir."

"These are personnel evaluations."

"I see."

"We can skip Gatsby and Kearns. I can't send anything very good back about them."

I couldn't either, so I was silent.

"Porringer gets his B-minus. You do better."

He must have had some second thoughts because he closed his drawer without withdrawing anything. "I give Sherman good marks for hard work and agent-recruitment initiative, but I have to pigeonhole him. He's Deputy COS level. Can go no higher until he learns to run a happy Station. That, I am unhappy to tell you, is going to stick with him, but it's my job to evaluate without tilt."

"I can see that."

"You present more of a problem. Bill Harvey is a vindictive son of a bitch, we can all agree, but something unique came out of him. He labelled you Untrustworthy--which is a blow to the jugular. Then, he withdrew it a week later. 'On reconsideration,' he wrote, 'this man is unorthodox but

I could hardly answer in the negative. I nodded.

"Hell, I do. I recognize the odds. Howard Hunt has got one shot in twenty, maybe one in fifty--Dorothy says I have the unfortunate habit of being a little too easy on myself. Call it one in a hundred. That particular one is a live nerve that runs from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. I believe in it. Another ten or fifteen years and I might be in contention for such an empyrean slot. So might you be in twenty-five or thirty years."

"I'm beginning to see what good brandy is all about."

"Ha, ha. Say that again, Harry." He fit his words to his actions by taking his sip from the snifter. He had a large hand and a nifty way of clicking his ring finger against the glass. "Fine. We comprehend the meaning of the end game. It's high purpose. Here's to high purpose." He raised his glass.

"To high purpose."

"Let me line up one most elusive target in our sights. It's the pattern of one's future life. One of these days you are going to get married."

"It's to be expected."

"A good wife for a CIA man has to be a work of art. About the time they assigned me to Guatemala, Dorothy was well along

in her third pregnancy. I had to leave her behind in Washington during a most difficult period. So, there are pros and cons. Career-wise, to be single can prove a plus in the short term. You can pick up and move anywhere. But over the long haul, it's an Agency minus to be without a wife. Objectively speaking, the best wife for a Company man is a rich girl, wholly presentable on the social side, who is self-sufficient enough to be able to survive without you for months at a time.

"So, let's put it this way. So long as you stay unmarried, take advantage of it. Look for every change of Division they offer you. Broaden your field. Then, when you have the right girl, and I'm talking about a masterpiece like Dorothy, get married. You can't make COS without that. A Station Chief is his own kind of Ambassador. We're the embodiment of what foreigners expect of Americans." He pointed a long finger up from the brandy snifter at a 45-degree angle. "You see, I have a thesis. We Americans abroad are engaged in Envy-Control. Because we've shown the globe a way to live that's clean and prosperous, they hate us all over the world. So, everything we do has to keep an eye on Envy-Control. They may envy us, but be sure to render them impotent in that envy. That's where your woman makes a difference."

All the while he spoke, I was thinking that that was not what I was in it for. It could have been the brandy, but I did not think I wanted to be DCI, no, I was here for the double life. In the double life, lay all my hope for sanity, and I nodded wisely as if the brandy and I were vintage friends.

received by Virginia postmarked Dec. 12, 1957. It was the only one.

The first letter I sent, therefore, as soon as I had changed the address of my new box, was written in an open code designed to establish our new working conditions.

Dec. 12, 1957

Dear older sister,

In your new place located in Louisville, we learned the town has now lost Mary's farm land. While our own friend George hopes to see you move from your present shopping center, he understands the necessity. He hopes that you're sending him

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I did not hear again from Kittredge until the weather had turned warm, and my second Christmas in Uruguay was approaching.

There is always the regrettable possibility of theft, haste, but there you are. Regards to all.

Your loving brother,

Dec. 12, 1957

Harry, dear Harry,

I never did have a talk with Hugh about recommencing our correspondence. Yet, I want so much to hear from you, and to

Maryland or Virginia postmarks ought to put us 99.9% over on the safe side.

The first letter I sent, therefore, so soon as I had changed the number of my own box, was written in an open code designed to establish our new working conditions.

Dec. 18, 1957

Dear older sister,

Is your new store located in Leesville, or across the town line near Aunt Mary's farm land? While our town friend George hates to see you move from your present shopping center, he understands the necessity. He heard that you're sending him shirts for his birthday, so postulates that they all be in white. Colored shirts make him shy. Lately, he tries to avoid attention. There is always the regrettable possibility of theft. Remote, but there you are. Regards to all.

Your loving brother,

Herb

splendid little fellow your godson has become. Of course, he is also in that frightful stage other mothers have warned me about--he walks, but does not talk! I cannot tell you what a fearful situation this creates, and it could last for many hysterical months to come. The only way to protect the furnishings is to keep Christopher out on the street in his stroller, or penned upstairs. Once he gets into our parlor, he comports himself like a drunken hellion, staggering about, arms out, trying to Frankenstein all our carefully acquired goodies. God, I love him. Each time I shriek, "No! Christopher," as he is about to knock over my hand-wrought Thomas Elfe chair or the beautiful Pimm piece, he offers this resolute manly little grin with its hint of the glint in Hugh's evil eye. Lord, I am awful when I come face to face with my impeccable love of property. Flesh and blood go to the block before antique value.

I find as I write, that I am preparing you for a considerable confession. I don't know that you've been made aware of the real landscape of my mental abdication all those many months ago. Yes, it was due to LSD, and the brooch, and Hugh, and you, all that one has admitted to, but there were

also unmanageable fantasies. For instance, I saw myself for all of one night as a young man disporting in brothels--I writhe as I purvey this. Yet the real cause I'm proceeding to recognize is something else altogether. I have never really talked to you about my work in TSS.

I now relate to you that whenever I think of the corpus of offices and corridors which compose Technical Services Staff over in our wing of Cockroach Alley, and needless to say, I think of it daily, in my sleep, and even when I was still nursing Christopher, why, what image do you think comes to my mind? It was of Allen Dulles, wrinkling his nose as he walks down our smelly corridors. In my dreams and daydreams he has a tail and a cloven hoof, simple as that. You do know that he was born with a club foot? The Dulles family had him operated on quicker than crackers, so he has only had to limp the least little bit through life except when gout strikes his Satanic appetites. Of course, given Allen's tropisms, he did marry a young lady named Clover. (Just change the "r" to an "n.") Harry, forgive this string of sitting ducks, but there are times when I hate Hugh, and hate Allen, and hate my more immediate boss, a zany Jew named Gottlieb. Gottlieb does square dances nimbly, calls the turns, dazzlingly quick indeed at all those intricate steps, yet does them with a whole club

foot--he's Allen's spiritual Jewish brother, don't you know, both charming devils. Gottlieb actually raises goats at his farm and gets up at five in the morning to feed his horned demons. These two are my diabolical superiors whom I adore and hate and never can come to terms with in my spirit since they've sunk their teeth into the depths of my Alpha and Omega both, yes, Harry, they inhabit me, which, I suspect, is what being a good boss is all about.

Well, don't fret--I'm now clear over on the meditative side of all these unruly emotions, and tell you this to fill you in on the previous intensity of my feelings. You see, I've had a badly divided Alpha-Omega on the justifiability of the work we do at TSS. It's sheer mind-control when you get down to it. We are looking for ways to manipulate the mind, and of course that means the souls of other people. Yet, here is my Harlot all for mind-control so long as it's the people he approves of doing it in the great war for the human future. Christians versus Reds! One asks oneself--were those Russian materialists brilliant or foolish to choose all the blood and fire of red as their emblematic color? Brilliant, I say, for it brings a necessary sense of the elemental to fill all that materialist void. Am I wandering? The one concept I've lived with ever since meeting Hugh is that Communists strive

twenty-four hours a day to find ways to coerce the soul of humankind; so must we labor our own twenty-four to confound them. TSS is the temple where we search for secret germs and hypnotic manipulations, abracadabra drugs and psychological methods to take over the enemy before they control us. Hugh, indeed, gave me a stiff lecture before we were married. It was to the effect (and this is his favorite thesis on the source of vital human energy) that only when the best and worst in ourselves are equally attached to the same mission, can we operate with all our strength. In an exceptional moment of candor, he said to me, "I am attached to rock-climbing because I have to conquer my fear of great falls--which is the good motive--but I also revel in it because I can dominate and humiliate others, which is an equally deep-rooted part of me." Harry, I confess I was stirred by his candor. (And by his instinctive delineation of the two persons of Alpha and Omega.) I knew that deep under my glowing college girl exterior were Shakespearean closets of blood, gore, and other unmentionables. I also knew that Hugh was a man who could steer a cool route through such an underworld.

Well, my husband-to-be did have his thesis well in hand. He said we were blessed in our work at the Agency because the best and the worst in ourselves could work together on a noble

venture. We were to thwart, dominate, and finally conquer the KGB, even as they, expressing by their lights the good and bad in themselves, were engaged, "tragic fellows," (Hugh's words) in an ignoble venture.

So, on I went to TSS with Allen's blessing and Hugh's strong arm around my waist. I was prepared to dive into the dark depths, but, of course, as soon as I finished training, they wrapped me in cotton. Technical Services Staff, as you can guess, is as highly compartmentalized as any place you're going to work in the Agency. Even now, after five years in TSS's recessive fold, I still can't decide such basic things as whether we go in for wet jobs, or, leaving assassination quite to the side, whether we indulge in several worse deeds, such as honest-to-god termination experiments. If one were to believe the gossip, it's true. Of course, such rumors do come to me in the large from Arnie Rosen, and I'm not always sure he's to be trusted.

Well, the time is here to let you in on a sub-confession. About a year and a half ago, Arnold began to work for me, and became my number one assistant. He's brilliant, and he's bad. You have to understand bad as an old Radcliffe foible. When we used to say that of a male friend, we meant that he was queer. Arnold--and you are absolutely not to repeat this--is very much

"Darling, we eat a lot of beans."

"Beans?" I didn't get it. Not at all.

"Once you know when the test is going to be given, the rest is merely a small bout of discomfort. About four hours before, you eat enough beans to work up a case of the 'controllable trots.'"

I slapped his hand. "Arnie, you're a psychopathic liar."

"I am not. The idea is to go in for the flutter able to think of nothing but your bowels. Your mind is not on whether you are telling a lie, but whether you can control your sphincter. The test administrator got awfully annoyed with me. 'You're one of those,' he said. 'General tension in all responses. It's hopeless.' 'I'm so sorry, sir,' I told him. 'It must be something I ate.'"

Harry, he's a little demon. If I'd never thought of Alpha and Omega before, Arnie Rosen would have suggested it to me by his presence. He has two totally different personalities--the one I expect that you are familiar with, and this considerably different one with me. I think Hugh had him attached to my court so I'd have at least one wise fellow around. He dishes me all this dirt and certainly indulges my out-sized curiosity about all those very strange people one does pass in the corridor. Rosen is full of whispers as to what might be going

on. "Kittredge, feel the aura that comes off that closed door! Dracula has to be sleeping on the other side. Why, it's Dracula's Lair!"

I accept that. I believe it. But, then I don't know. I may be hyper-sensitive to the occult. (One full summer and a half ago, I did, you may remember, perceive the ghost of Augustus Farr, and to my over-fevered recollection, he did limp just like Allen on a bad day. Ho, ho, ho.)

Well, I want to take you back a few years. To the time when I was wrapped in cotton. Allen had taken to my thesis of Alpha and Omega so completely that he funded me right from the start. On the completion of training--that was the spring we met--I was set up with an assistant, (not Rosen, of course, he does come later) and with a bona-fide group of five graduate students in psychology at Cornell who did not even know they were being paid by the Agency. Another bit of nifty cover. I used to fly up to my seminar in Ithaca every two weeks to see how the research was progressing.

By every visible measure, I was doing nothing dirty. It was splendid. I was merely developing my chosen work. I believe I was a little in love with Allen during those first couple of years. If not for Hugh, I might actually have contemplated going to bed with the man. Allen was dear. I

certainly loved him enough to want to develop something of exceptional use for him. So I dashed off in the wrong direction. Left to myself, I might have pursued Alpha and Omega into the labyrinth more intuitively. I had been serving as my own laboratory, after all, when I first came upon the conception. We won't put Kittredge's personal dimensions up against grand old Master Plumber Freud, but the good doctor did, in fact, spend many years analyzing himself before giving us ego and id. So, I wonder if I needed more time down in my own flooded mines?

Well, I didn't get it. I went searching too quickly for overt tests the Agency could use. If it were true that we were each of us Alpha and Omega both, then my job was to figure out a way, via my precepts, to spot a potential agent. Conversely, we would certainly want to uncover defectors in our own ranks.

I worked for the last five years, therefore, trying to elaborate a test-profile for potential treachery. Computers have improved so much in this same period that I could have saved myself half of the labor, dammit, that went into daily activities about as inspiring as the grading of papers. I know why I'm tempted to bring you a little closer to the working drudgery of my former tasks. Mental illness appears dramatic on the exterior, yet its approach is usually heralded by

boredom. Be it said, I'm speaking of intensive boredom at a high level. Either Alpha or Omega--whoever is buried--just won't put up with the living arrangements any more. Omega, if underneath, can't introduce any reforms. Alpha won't allow it. Too many entrenched procedures would thereby be imperiled. Alpha may be just as bored as Omega, but Alpha, at least, is holding the power. One can endure a great deal of boredom if wielding power. But neither Alpha nor Omega can take too much when neither has any. At the time I joined CIA, most of my early theoretical development of Alpha and Omega had been inspired under the auspices of Omega. Now, at TSS, I shifted the development over to Alpha because, after all, we were working to develop a test. My Alpha had always been in charge of programs, measurable concepts, statistics, all of that. Once in power, however, my Alpha certainly shut down my Omega. (My Alpha is a brute precisely because it has been the half of me I respected less through my adolescence.) Remember how lively I used to be on certain evenings at the Stable? That was because poor and now much suppressed Omega was able to come forward as hostess for such occasions. Her sop. How she adored her dinner parties. But Alpha. You should have seen me in my office with print-outs in my hand, and Alpha at every command post.

Darling, I don't know how interested you are in all this, but I do want to give you an idea of the kind of test we worked out, so you'll have some notion. The final form, as of eight months ago, showed up as twenty test sheets with twenty-five word pairings on each page. Night-day, red-green, sun-moon, so forth. The subject is told to give a positive or negative rating of 1 to 5 to each word. Should it be a plus 5 to hot, for example, and a minus 5 to cold, our testee would seem to be telling us he hates winter and loves Southern climates. All that actually signifies, however, is that the top dog (whether Alpha or Omega) is making his claim to be high on the tropics. The other persona is yet to be heard from. We sneak up on that by way of similar pairings, winter-summer, for one. If the same subject now shows himself more positively inclined to winter, we can suspect that the less prominent side has begun to speak. We also know that decisions in such a person can oscillate back and forth between A and O without too much friction. Winter-summer comes, after all, only a page later in the test. Ice-fire comes much later. Well, you get the idea. We start with short Anglo-Saxon words. No, not f---. More like night-day, red-green, hot-cold, sweet-sour, loud-soft, man-woman, left-right, calm-lively, work-play, hate-love, peace-war; then slowly, over the twenty pages, we introduce our

English and Latin rivers of vocabulary whenever we go to a foreign tongue.

Harry, for the last five years, in increasing burden every year, I have carried this gnawing kernel of woe, doubt, misery, and burgeoning frustration. I knew I was on the wrong street. And every year across the corridor, so to speak, (actually, he works out of town) another psychologist named Gittinger, who came to us from his work at the State Hospital in Norman, Oklahoma, has been running rings around my tests merely by adapting the good old Wechsler Intelligence test to what he calls the Wechsler-Bellevue G. Gittinger, who's a good stocky Santa Claus type with a pepper and salt goatee, can use his battery of tests (which take only one full session, not my laborious five) to spot defectors and putatives better, I fear, than I can. Of course, he, too, doesn't see how to export his stuff to Moscovite subjects in the shadow of the Kremlin, but it's useful where needed at Headquarters, and can be applied to neutral agents in places like, yes, Uruguay. Don't be surprised if one of Gittinger's elves pays you a visit soon.

Rosen, from the moment he came to me, provided ample warning of the turn in my affairs. Through his dish, I began to learn how the Wechsler-Gittinger was prospering at TSS, and

how I was not. Arnie even said to me, "Angel, your work is seen as too expensive for the results."

"What are they really saying?" I asked.

"That it may be a lot of talk."

"What's the worst thing you've heard?"

"Dubious is the bad word."

Then I received news that Gittinger had been allocated scrumptious funding by way of one of our more elegant cover schemes. He now has a foundation to play with called the Human Ecology Fund. I've even lost my seminar at Cornell.

"Kittredge, you're heading toward the shadows," said Arnold about then. He was right. I was not funded for new research at Cornell.

This has been my first education on the down-slope. Harry, life has always treated me as a darling, and for much too long. If my mother merely adored me whenever she came around to noticing my existence, my father more than made up for it. Ever been feted emotionally by a riproaring Elizabethan of a Shakespearean? We never did get into formal incest, Dad and I, but I knew what it was to have a powerful man's love at the age of three. It never faltered. Just grew more and more possessive. How Daddy hated Hugh. I think that's the first emotional storm I ever encountered. Up to

then our princess trod only on carpet. Radcliffe was a coronation. I was either adored all over again, or envied, or both, and didn't even notice. My brain was so fertile that I could have gone off on a desert island and been deliriously happy with myself for years. The only pains I knew were the ferocious congestions of new ideas. Lord, how they were forever streaming into my thoughts. And as Hugh's wife, figure-toi! Twenty-three years old, yet grizzled veterans of the intelligence wars were in line to charm me. Darling, was ever a brilliant fool more spoiled?

Now, at TSS, after five years, I was on the down slope. Five years gone by. If, at first, I was obliged to measure the negative changes with a micrometer, toward the end, with the aid of Rosen, it might as well have been an odometer. Gittinger was growing greater by the week and month. Yet, it proved impossible to dislike the man. He's a wise, sly Jolly Roger, an Oklahoma raconteur who, as Arnie says, uses his twang like a guitar string. Gittinger is the only one in TSS who can dependably dispense happy laughter. Sometimes, he shows off for us. Give him a Wechsler-Bellevue G test result of a man or woman he has never met and he will return an interpretation that is about as complete and complex as a personage out of Proust. He's truly formidable. Gittinger is the only one in

the gang who can get such a splendid read-out off a Wechsler-Bellevue G, but then he works twenty-four hours a day. He's also a great assimilator. Everything that comes his way is woven into these test read-outs. I think G. would correlate the craters on the moon if he thought it would help. He collates in (forgive this all-adhesive jargon) operators, agents, taps, sneakies, verbal interviews, photos (for body language), movies, and handwriting analysis. He charms all of us, because he is, or pretends to be, a modest man. Always downgrades his own work. "I think my tests are a self-delusional obsession. Another fellow could do as well with Tarot cards." So he charms all the competitors he's outstripping, and that includes me. (Although it did hurt when Rosen told me that everyone now referred to Gittinger as "our resident genius.") Harry, there was a time when they spoke that way of me. So I know the pains of a toppled monarch. Yet G. always flattered me. "Your Alpha and Omega will take us yet into the true caves. I just make charts of the surface."

That's all very well, but over this last year I've lost out wholly. Gottlieb is already fielding his work with case officers and agents (wherever a Chief of Station will allow it) and I have become one of his ten or fifteen adjuncts. The Gardiner Annex to Gitteridge, you could call it. His boys

collate my Long Toms onto the Wechsler-Bellevue G to check out where we're right, and where we're wrong. By now, I wait eagerly for their results.

Harry, hear the worst. Shortly before the LSD episode, I was cut down to one assistant, Rosen, and put on collation with our graphology department. Instead of using Long Tom to show our handwriting experts how to find Alpha and Omega, the graphologists now give marks to our results.

About this time, Arnold had a long talk with me. It was a preface, I knew, to what he would tell me at the end, which is that he was going to, or had already applied (and/or been accepted) for a transfer over to Gittinger's track. "Loyalty is a virtue," he said at last, "but ambition is my motivating disease." He actually said that. "Kittredge, I want you to understand," he went on, "I want to get out of dee basement." Suddenly, it was no longer so funny. I saw it through his eyes. To be Jewish in the Agency doesn't call for an automatic good fit, but then to be locked up as well in his closet. However, he did weep (if most silently) and I think it was in anger at his own ambition. He also warned me that the time had come for Hugh to intervene.

"Kittredge, you have real enemies in TSS."

"You'd better name a few, or I won't listen to this."

"I can't point to the real estate. But it's in the air. They could be some of Hugh's enemies."

"You mean I can't even create antagonists of my own?"
God, we were having coffee in the K-shed cafeteria at three in the afternoon, Rosen sitting across from me with tears in his eyes, and I felt like screaming. "I think I've created a few enemies of my own," I said.

"Maybe you did."

"I was too cocky when I began."

"Yes," he said, "probably."

"And I did show a little too much disdain for some of my colleagues."

"Oh, you know you did." He was virtually crooning.

"I may have been uncooperative with my overseers. Especially when they wanted to change my terminology."

"Yes."

"But all that was in the beginning. Lately, my only crime is that I insisted on obtaining a few extra perks for my best research assistant."

This was meant to strike him precisely between the eyes, but it only brought out his anger. I think he was hoping to find that anger. "Kittredge, let's go back to your office," he said. "I've got some yelling to do myself."

Whereupon, once we made the long, endlessly long silent walk back down Cockroach Alley, he did unload a bit. "The fact, Kittredge, is that after five years, the results are not sufficiently useable. There's a fundamental flaw in the test. Putative agents make prodigiously good liars. They're not giving themselves up because Mrs. Gardiner Montague has devised a few word games for them."

"How dare you," I said. "We've loaded the thing with traps."

"But whom have you trapped?"

He was oversimplifying, and I was ill. It was as if one nerve-cord in me had irrevocably snapped.

"Kittredge, I love you," he said. "I would never leave you. But I just don't think the damn thing works. I will not spend my life supporting an enterprise that can't stand up."

"And Alpha-Omega? Would you believe in that if we didn't have to fashion all those tests?"

"I believe in it, dear one. As metaphor."

Well, we were through, and we knew it.

"Arnold, before you leave, tell me the real worst. What are they saying out there? Metaphor is not the word they are employing."

"You don't want to hear."

"I believe you owe me that much."

"All right." But he sat down to tell me. I realized suddenly that he was not a silly man nor a weak man, nor a witty scamp. Under all, was the person who will yet come out of some further resolution of his impossible A and O, the future gentleman was there before me, a most steady and resolute bureaucrat. We will hear from Arnold Rosen yet. "Kittredge," he said, "out on the grapevine, the common notion at TSS is that Alpha and Omega do not really exist, and that you have merely gone in for a five-year build-up of Alpha as a species of consciousness, and Omega as a surrogate for unconsciousness. That is the common view."

"They still can't get it through their heads. How often must I say that Alpha and Omega each have a separate super-ego, ego, and id. Each possesses its own unconscious."

"Everyone knows that, Kittredge. They feel that when you try to apply it, we're nonetheless brought back to the conscious mind and the unconscious all over again, and Alpha is the first and Omega the second. Let me say that such people are not the worst of your detractors."

"Tell me, as I have asked you more than once, what the worst are saying."

"I don't care to."

However, he added, what was one to act on? The Agency had its obligatory emphasis on do-what-it-takes. Gottlieb then spoke: Kittredge, in his opinion, was to be seen as a great inventor. Great inventors suffered in unfair fashion often.

"What it probably comes down to," said Helms, "is that TSS, of necessity, has to run a concealed tent show. Good morale is crucial to all such ventures."

"The trouble," said Gottlieb, "is that the perceived reality tends to become the psychological reality. The psychological reality we are obliged to deal with in Kittredge's case is that rank-and-file in TSS do tend to see Alpha and Omega as some kind of sound and light show."

"Paranoid sound and light show?" asked Hugh.

"Look," said Helms, "we can bat these words back and forth until the badminton courts are too dark to play upon. The crucial difficulty is that it's one thing to support an underground circus like TSS, but it is absolutely verboten to let word get around that it is a freak show. Kittredge has had five years and an absence of conclusive results. We've got to find another boulot for her."

Boulot. Old argot for job, kiddo. Harry, I've never seen Hugh so upset as when he related this conversation to me. Do you know, it was on the day your brooch arrived. That may

explain a few things. I plunged right off into the LSD. Anything to come up with a new grasp on the testing process. I took terrible travels on that little trip. My vision led me down a long purple road to phosphorescent pools of moonlight where pigs were wading, and worse.

Now, I put in six to eight hours a day on graphology, a fascinating business after all. And I still pursue a few thoughts on the development of Alpha and Omega. My bully Alpha, much bewildered, is now comparable to a surly office boy who must take orders from an Omega lady. I fear she tends to float just a little too much in space as she ponders things. Oh, I'll be back, I promise I'll be back.

Now, you can see, however, why I want to hear about your life again. And in detail. I sense all over again that I do not know enough about the details of my own life. I certainly never knew how much fellow workers, often strangers, were determining my fate. Your old letters gave me some understanding there, despite all.

Harry, write again. I am truly fascinated with how you spend your days. It seems so long since I've held one of your full letters in my hand. What has happened to AV/OCADO and his tormented soul? And what of your Russian garden parties and dear Hyman GOGOL Bosqueverdes and his wife who whispers nice

things about Gordy Morewood? Yes, give me all the rest, your Gatsby with his yellow hair and the dark-brown mustache that Hunt made him shave off. You see, I remember, and want to know more.

You can even write to me about your upwardly mobile COS. I realize now why I disliked Mr. Hunt. He was that worldly principle I was secretly unequipped to deal with. But no longer will I indulge such prejudices. If one would have new ideas, one must find a way to renew oneself. So tell me all about him too. My curiosity deepens, my strictures become flexible. My love for you will always grow apace, dear long absent man.

Kittredge

with, small windows opened for the first time. I had at last
a feeling of how much desire she could get across to me.

Jan. 11, 1885
Dearest Elizabeth,

I will not try to tell you how much your letter brought
you. I feel as if I write this reply while we are sitting side
by side with a drink of tea in understanding of your great
troubles.

Enough, let me cheer you by telling of the changes in my
life. So much has happened to my work. Even so much as
bring you up to the work, waiting for me the mother of new
ventures attached to the State. My heart, on a busy day
when two or three things are waiting for a full day's work.

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She had written the letter on air mail sheets of flimsy in
her small Gothic script. By the time I was done, love had
thrown another noose around any longing to escape from love.

Now, I longed for her more than before, if with less
respect. My father's detestation of helplessness had made its
appearance in me. I did not approve of her new and modest
tone. Yet another part of me would have been ready, had she
been near, to go to bed with her. Since she was now more of an

equal, sexual ambitions stirred for the first time. I had an inkling of how much desire she could yet arouse in me.

Jan. 11, 1958

Dearest Kittredge,

I will not try to tell you how near your letter brought you. I feel as if I write this reply while we are sitting side by side over a drink; I live in understanding of your cruel troubles.

Enough. Let me divert you by telling of the changes in my life. So much has happened in my work. Even to attempt to bring you up to the mark, outlines for me the number of new ventures attached to the Station. At its worst, on a busy day when two or three things are coming to a boil (or coming apart) one could think one was in the midst of a Rube Goldberg machine. In contrast, on a rare and quiet day, the variety of what we're doing allows me to realize how rich and interesting life might be, if I were able to contemplate it. So I seize these few hours. It is a quiet Saturday afternoon in the midst of our January summer and everyone I know is at one or another of our good clay beaches and coffee-colored sea. It's hot, and I sit in my shorts, still in the same cheap hotel room, believe it or not--I'm one of their three longest residents by now.

Kittredge, I pride myself at how little I need of material things. On the other hand, I virtually percolate with pleasure at the thought of how many Station activities we have. I feel as if it is my store, and I'm taking proud inventory.

Well, let me give just some of the news. I have tidbits to send your way about the Bosqueverdes and two awful people from the Soviet Russia Division now living in their quarters. In another part of town, AV/ANTGARDE is fighting pitched battles on many a Tuesday night with the left student youth group. AV/ANTGARDE are the sign painters, do you recollect? And there's still Peones and Libertad and Chevi Fuertes to bring you up on--they're in a potentially incendiary triangle--plus the Russians, which is to say, our one Russian couple. I am now on good visiting terms with Masarov and his wife. Yes, the greatest single change is that I am, under the most stringent precautions you can imagine, permitted, even encouraged, to cultivate this relationship with Masarov. It has turned the pockets of my inner life altogether inside-out. Because it is so very much on my mind, I believe I must relate it to you first.

Before commencing, however, let me go down to the Saturday mob milling below on the Avenue of the 18th of July and buy more flimsy. I don't altogether enjoy writing, or reading

letters, on this desperately thin stuff, but it's suitable for security. I just don't want to call attention to us.

Twenty minutes later

God, I adore you, Kittredge. I am also absolutely confounded that anyone in our line of work can doubt for one moment how absolutely valid is the existence of Alpha and Omega. Well, a good writing teacher I know at Yale said never to use qualifiers like absolutely unless one was hopelessly in love. Absolutely not.

To my good friend Boris Gennadyevitch Masarov and his gypsy wife Zenia, then. (She told me once that she was one-nineteenth gypsy.)

"One-nineteenth?" I asked her.

"You are brutal as Russian with fascination for arithmetic," she responded.

"One-nineteenth?" I inquired again.

"Are good looking young man. Why ask silly questions?"

Having set down this exchange, I see that I have failed to present her quality. She is not shallow. She carries herself as if nothing has transpired in Russia of any moment since Dostoyevsky was saved by the czar's reprieve from the firing

squad. I suppose I am saying that she elicits a chord in one's historical appreciation. I now know how an upper middle class or aristocratic woman of the provinces might appear to us in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. The best of Russian literature comes alive for me when I am around Zenia. I think of Dostoyevsky again, and of Tolstoy getting ready to take his last walk out of Yasnaya Polyana (all right, I know that's 1910, or thereabouts, but still it's Nineteenth Century!) and so many of Turgeniev's dissatisfied women come to mind, and Chekhov's incomparable glimpses of Russian backwaters. Zenia is all of them for me and more. Yet, she is also a woman who has lived under the horrors of Stalin, oh, Kittredge, you can see the depredations of Soviet history through the sense one gets of her much battered soul. While she looks over forty, the Russians show their age in ways we do not. Do you know, I believe they take a certain grim satisfaction in wearing their souls on the wrinkled surface of their face. (The vons and the grafs at Heidelberg used to be proud, after all, of duelling scars.) It's so different from us. I think we Americans would go squeak before we'd ever let anyone have the satisfaction of thinking they were looking into our spiritual depths: of course, that may be exactly what the Russians have to offer. "I have passed through cataclysmic days, and permitted state

horrors to be visited on friends, but I have never lied to my soul." That is what her face says to me. (She has the most extraordinary deep dark eyes--operative definition of Otchi Chorniya.) Yet she has to have been around frightful events. She is KGB, after all. Or at least her husband is. Then she tells me that she is thirty-three. Yes, history has indeed cut its lines into Russian faces.

Well, here I am, rushing new people on to you without the courtesy of a little development. I am so impatient. The truth is that this friendship with the Masarovs is the most interesting relation I have at present with anyone in Uruguay, even if it has been put together like an arranged betrothal with marriage brokers on both sides.

At Headquarters, I suspect the international happenings of the last year count for less than they do here. We are, with all else, part of the State Department. "Our cover makes us part of the crust" has become one of Hunt's sayings. Of course, he doesn't exactly hate the idea of serving as de facto First Secretary to the American Ambassador in Uruguay. The procedure, begun under Sonderstrom, of attending foreign embassy functions proceeds fast forward with Howard. Jefferson Patterson, the Eisenhower appointee, is a genteel man with a

hopeless stammer in English: count on him for less when he attempts Spanish. As it was with Mayhew, Patterson continues to avoid functions. His deputy, the Counselor, is worse, and the reason is his wife. She is a lush who has been known to take off her shoes at Embassy dances and embark on impromptu high kicks--"Grand Jetès," she announces. Needless to say, they took her off the circuit. Which leaves the field open to the Hunts, and the Porringers on occasion, and myself.

Combine this with the State Department's estimate that Khrushchev's consistent calls lately for armament reductions, summit meetings, and cultural interchanges, while clearly not to be trusted, must be met, nonetheless, with compensatory American moves. We-cannot-lose-another-contest-for-world-opinion is the present State Department stance. While Hunt hates Communists first, liberals second, and the State Department a close third, he sure can play the role of First Secretary.

Besides, word has come to us from Western Hemisphere Division. Carefully monitored fraternizing with the Soviets is now an option. Theoretically, we're always prepared to get friendly with any Soviet who throws us a side-glance, but as a practical matter, we always act around the canape tables as if

we are offering Christmas politesse to lepers. You don't put a career on the line by fraternizing unless there is a directive.

Well, said directive has come in. And we have certainly heated up the GOGOL outpost. The Bosqueverdes had a quiet winter photographing exits and entrances through the Soviet Embassy gate, but now with late spring and summer, the Russian garden parties are going again. The Sourballs thought enough of this opportunity to send down two of their operators. Almost all of Soviet Russia Div's people are totally anti-Soviet Russians, or Poles, or Finns, who are intensely fluent in Russian. They do make an odd breed. Insular to an extraordinary degree, they give off about as much warmth as a barnacle. Deposits of paranoia encircle their relations with everyone. Yet they give themselves Irish names with the oddest misspellings. Monikers like Heulihaen (pronounced Hoolihan) and Flarrety (pronounced Flaherty.) Heulihaen and Flarrety have been installed on the two main eight-hour stints at GOGOL outpost for the last month, and since then have been photographing the very hell out of the lawn parties in the Soviet Embassy garden.

Hunt calls these important operators the Finnish Micks. Left to themselves, these Finnish Micks would pass over to us about as much information as you could get from a Mickey Finn,

but Hunt knows how to play the web. His rabbi has pulled a string over at Soviet Russia Division. Result: the Finnish Micks most reluctantly provide Hunt with bits of poop and scam.

The largest discovery (accomplished by way of filming the Russians and their guests in the garden, then studying such home movies around the clock) is that more than a tad of infidelity goes on behind the Soviet Embassy walls. The hottest piece of specificity is the connection between the new Soviet KGB chief, the Resident, named Varkhov, Georgi Varkhov, who looks exactly as he should, built like a tank, shaved head like a bullet, and-- are you wholly prepared?--our own soulful Zenia.

Now, I was apprised of this item before I became friendly, all proportions kept, with the Masarovs. I still think Zenia is soulful, although her taste for Varkhov, if true, puts me off. The Finnish Micks, however, seem pretty sure of their ground. The working logic for such conclusions, as I piece it out, comes to this: In social life, we are always surrounded by hints of infidelity at every party. We see smiles, whispers, glances--all of that movie business sign language, so to speak. Yet our perceptions are transitory. Hints of behavior come and leave but we usually cannot confirm what we have seen. On film, however, if we expend the patience to

The urgent phone call revolved not around my work, but my personal deeds, and was from Sally. She had to be with me. She had just been to the doctor; she was pregnant.

Over the last few months, I had been attempting to see her less often, but the results had been inconclusive. At the end of each of our sessions I was full of apologies at how my work was keeping us apart, yet I would always make another date, even when I knew I would break it. Power over one woman, at least, was important to me.

Now, however, she was pregnant. My poor Sally was honest, or honest enough when pushed to the truth (since I did push her) to admit she had also had intercourse with Sherman in this period--so could not know whose child it was. Although, she would swear it was mine.

I felt close to nausea. Soon, I recognized that she felt worse. She would not have an abortion, she told me. She would proceed to have the child, "and," she said, "let's hope he doesn't look too much like you." If it was a boy, she was certain it would be mine. Her logic seemed unassailable to her. "I want him to look a little like you," she said.

We sat on the edge of my bed, grasping each other in the way of beggars who hope to draw warmth out of the gnawing hole within themselves. For the first time, we neither took off our clothes nor made love with them on. Even as I pressed her to have an abortion, I knew she would refuse. She had a dreadful fear of abortion. I found a demon within my inmost worm. The thought that I would be having a child closeted in the home of Sherman Porringer did appeal to a very small part of me. I understood suddenly that evil did not have to be all-consuming--it need touch no more than one nerve. I did my best to tell myself that it might be Sherman's child after all. Then, I decided that it did not matter. Sherman, devoted

habituée of every good (and low) brothel in Montevideo, deserved whatever he got. It also occurred to me that he could have syphilis, (in which case, so could I) although, loyal hog to modern medicine, Porringer was always consuming each new antibiotic that came into the Embassy pharmacy. He was a walking Myocinazine of a Pennisulfamilimide.

Sally departed to the tune of mutual agreements to discuss these matters further. I even thought of the child to come. That finally gave me one fine pang. Some part of me might soon be trapped beneath Porringer's roof. I consoled myself with the thought that Sally would be a passionate and loving mother, albeit a loud one with a register of shrieks for the spills and slops of childhood.

I had certainly lost my Saturday. That night I tried to write a second letter.

January 11, 1958

Dear Kittredge,

It's late enough to be January 12th, or midnight just about. Work has come, work has gone--a crisis with Fuertes has proved not critical. I'll fill you before too long on our Uruguay ace, but prefer to dwell first on my new KGB cronies.

and Porringer and I took up our cover as First Assistant and Second Assistant to the First Secretary to the Ambassador--shades of Gilbert and Sullivan! Hunt, looking over our team, decided that I needed a putative fiancée. (Agency words that will be found engraved on the small bones of my skull will include ongoing, viable, in-house, and not least, putative. Yes, a putative fiancée.

"How about Libertad La Lengua?" I said to that.

"How about Nancy Waterston," he replied.

I'm sure it's been so long since I mentioned our Administrative Officer that I must refresh your memory. I believe I described Nancy once as sweet, bright, and hard-working but undeniably plain and very much a spinster. She used to be devoted to Mayhew, and Hunt now gets ditto loyalty. In the beginning, I took her out a couple of times when Mrs. Sonderstrom or Mrs. Porringer or Mrs. Gatsby or Mrs. Kearns couldn't find an unattached single girl for me. Nancy has to be ten years older than myself, and I would guess, if I were expert in these matters, that she has never been to bed with a man.

Well, if it had been the Swiss Embassy, or even the Embajada de Gran Bretana, I would have accepted the chore, but

it felt curiously demeaning to enter the Soviet lair with Nancy on my arm.

Hunt would have none of these niceties. "Do you know the meaning of 'The Colonel requests'?" he asked.

"Howard, Nancy won't enjoy herself."

She will."

He laughed a lot at that in the sky-high skinny whinny that you so detested. You can see what a sly dog he is at such times. He has a long, big-knuckled middle finger, and for the life of me, Kittredge, (and I hope my candor will not put you off), I had an image of Howard inserting his long middle finger into the poor chaste fold of Miss Waterston. It was the oddest flash to come into the conversation. I saw the finger probing back and forth in a series of authoritative strokes. The mind takes us where it will, won't it?

"You look a little glassy-eyed," said Hunt.

"What is your motive?" I asked about as coldly as I dared.

"It's a ploy, Harry. The King Brothers won't know what to make of you and Nancy."

"They'll see right through it."

"Well, kid, they might not. Because I want you to introduce Nancy as your fiancée."

"She agreed?"

"Of course she agreed. It'll be fun for her."

I was thinking I had to alert Sally or she might even make a scene. "Howard," I went on, "if you'll tell me the real motive, it will go down easier."

"The Sovs are always running a dupe-show on us. I've seen one of their joy-boys with three different Russian tomatoes at three different foreign embassy functions. Each time, the same fellow has the gall to introduce the lady"--he held both hands far apart and dipped quotation marks with bent fingers--"as his wife. The time has come to blind them with our dipsy-doodle."

Well, Kittredge, to my surprise, I ended up having quite an evening chez les Russes. We arrived at their Embassy on a Saturday in late afternoon and the light was kind to the soft yellow tones of their stone manse. Like much of Montevideo architecture, it is a hodge-podge of Italian Renaissance, French Baroque, Transylvanian Gothic, Oak Park, Illinois, circa 1912, and plain old Russian samovar. I jest, but it is a big sprawling villa with massive doors and turrets and ingrown balconies that look like ingrown toenails, dwarf windows and magnum windows, forbidding outer gates, black-spiked fence with painted gold tips on the spearheads. "Bluebeard's castle," I whispered to Nancy, as we entered the outer gate, and were steered by a wholly uncompromising young Russian Marine to the

garden. My remark put Nancy into giggles, and I, on my side, had an unruly impulse to look up at the Bosqueverdes' window where the Bolex H16 is posted, and give a clenched fist of a Communist salute to the Finnish Micks.

Well, I've never described a big embassy party on the theory that you're familiar enough with them in Washington, so why be offered details of our lesser spread? Still, the Russians do it up. They had invited about every foreign gang in town--Norway, Greece, Japan, Portugal, Costa Rica, name it, even the Orden Soberana de Malta, the Reino de Belgica, and the Republica Socialista Chescolovaquia--which I include for the spelling. By the time the international tide was in, there may have been one hundred and fifty people on that lawn drawn from as many as forty embassies and consulates. A Soviet offering of hospitality to the world: one ton of black caviar, endless supplies of vodka, plus the usual array of appetizers which, contemplated one by one, do strike the eye like a bead of acid-green oil pigment on a mound of cadmium orange. They also serve red and white Georgian Caucasus wine--some of the worst stuff ever corked--and all the embassy types from all over the world did their best to practice English on me. I'm so glad I'm not really in the State Department. There is something so prodigiously fraudulent about the congealed friendliness of

these embassy types. So many foreigners moving their arms in the manner of prehistoric wings. Such anxiety in the air. Everyone stirs with the restlessness of birds.

All this was exacerbated by the presence of Americans in the Russian garden. How I wish you could have been here. Your beauty would have polarized the greensward. As it was, I anticipated in advance just how it was going to show in the films. From above, each American and each Russian looked like a magnetic node in a cloud of iron filings. You could see foreign embassy types clustered around each of us. Up close, these birds look more like lizards. Pieces of information are equal to particles of food. Tongues dart out to snatch each morsel.

Afternoon opened into twilight, and another mood settled in. Everyone got a little wild (by which I mean no more than a shade over into the indiscreet.) I understand movie people call this time of day the magic hour, because natural light is soft and wonderful, but everything has to be captured on film in thirty minutes. (If I ever have to face a firing squad, I hope it's in a garden at twilight--what a thought!) I kept picturing the frustrations of Heulihaen and Flarrety as they bore down on us with their lens and (it better be) ultra high

speed film. Of course, the more we all acted up at the party, the less light there was to satisfy our Finns.

Pretty soon, those minor and major embassies who happen on this day to have no particular business to initiate, commence to leave, and the lawn opens for dramatic action. Now, you can pick up on what is happening across the garden. Hunt is talking to Varkhov who in turn is paying court to Dorothy. Before long, Zenia takes a stroll from the Foreign Office to the KGB, which is to say leaves two of Great Britain's officials to join her Resident, and she and Varkhov now laugh loudly at Hunt's jokes. In another corner of the garden, a joy-boy (from Irkutsk, no doubt) is flirting with Sally Porringer who no longer seems afraid that Sherman will put her tit in a wringer, and I, giddy from caviar after a year of eating meat twice a day, and not impervious to the vodka, move in on Boris Masarov, keeping Nancy at my side. "I want you to meet my fiancée," I say in the best good humor, as if the idea were mine all along.

Kittredge, I must tell you. After a most restricted adolescence and young manhood, I am now finally learning what wonderful and mysterious beings women are. I confess it. Nancy Waterston, whose face on a good day, would give competition to a parson's daughter, narrow, pinched, and with

the folds of her eyes, nose and mouth pulled by duty, her small bust unable to protrude beyond the forward hunch of her shoulders, nonetheless now looked attractive, as if sparklers had been set off on her wedding cake, and she was being lit by the reflection. When a plain woman looks dazzling for an instant, one's breath stands still that the universe is so full of surprise. (Which is equal to saying, I suppose, that the universe is meaningful.)

Masarov reacted most formally. "I congratulate you," he said. "I lift glass to toast the vital spirit of future marriage."

"Mr. Masarov, that is a distinguished toast," said Nancy in her good Midwestern accent so cram-packed with honest step-by-step sentiment. But then she gave a little laugh as such honesty came face to face with her present role. "Maybe you will attend our wedding," she said.

"It will be when?" he asked, and I could not help but notice that he was looking down the length of the lawn to where Zenia and Varkhov were still talking to Hunt and Dorothy. The anguish on Masarov's face (which I cannot say I would have perceived had not the Zenia-Varkhov liaison been advertised to me as a seventy-five per cent likelihood) now seemed analogous to the wound of a tired animal who pauses, blood dripping,

before gathering itself to climb one more hill. He downed his drink in a shot and stopped a Uruguayan waiter who was carrying an ice-cold bottle of vodka on a tray.

"We don't know the date yet," said Nancy, "because I believe in long engagements." Was she drunk, I wondered, or merely intoxicated by new-found talents? "That's an old family institution," she told him. "My father and mother went together seven years before their wedding bells spoke up long enough to say, 'Enough of this. Please ring us. We're rusty.'"

"Yes, " he said, "may I ask? What does your father do?"

"He's a circus acrobat," said Nancy, and giggled again. Her eyes were dancing behind her eyeglasses. I realized, as if I were cleansing the inside of myself with the nicest pomade of compassion and sweet sorrow, that this must be the liveliest evening she had had in Uruguay. "No," she said, "our country was founded on the idea that you cannot tell a lie. My father is retired, but he used to be a corporate executive in insurance in Akron, Ohio."

Masarov looked relieved, as if a piece of intelligence had just checked out. "My country was not founded," he said in reply. "More likely, was shot out of a cannon."

Be certain, I underlined that last remark for referral to Hunt.

Masarov held up his glass. "Toast to future nuptials."

"I like being toasted," said Nancy.

"First, however, learn to drink our vodka. Americans are always telling me it is hard to keep up with Russian banquets. Because they do not know the secret."

"Oh, give me the secret," she said.

At just this juncture, Varkhov, who was making a tour of his remaining guests, joined us, and jumped in so quickly on Masarov's speech that I realized both men were equally well used to informing all and sundry how to imbibe Russian spirits. Varkhov's syntax in English, however, was what an instructor at the Farm once called Russky Tarzan. Articles, pronouns and the verb to be withered away. Primeval grunts were substituted.

"Not sipping," he said. "Never sipping. Gulp vodka. Only,"--Varkhov held up one Russian commissar of a flat, heavy palm--"Offer toast. First! Deepest toast. Appraisal of relationship. From heart. Offered from heart, drink vodka in gulp." Which he did, and whistled for the waiter to come back. "Fill glasses. Not worry. Small glasses."

We filled glasses. "After vodka," he said, "eat caviar. Better, eat zakushki. Appetizer."

"Yes," said Nancy, as if she were well used to obeying orders.

"Then, darling lady never drunk."

"Ho, ho, ho," said I.

"Cynic," said Varkhov.

He held up his glass again. "Toast," he said. "To evening, to future of peace, to lovely betrothed lady, to American groom with mission," and he winked at me. We were all drunk, yessiree baby.

Outside on the Bulevar Espana you could hear the traffic going to and fro between the city to our right and Pocitos Beach with its high rise apartment houses down to the left. I thought of the safe-house where Chevi and I meet. From side streets, the tangential whoops of adolescents ricocheted through the evening air. Quite as abruptly as he had joined us, Varkhov bowed and left us for another group.

"Do you play chess?" Masarov asked me.

"Yes," I said, "not all that well."

"But not so badly?"

"I can play," I said.

"Good. You must be very good. I will invite you to my home. It is nearby. And you, Miss Waterston."

"Name the date, I'll bring the cake," she said.

"An old American expression?" he asked. Was I reading too much into him, or was it said with something like longing? He not only spoke reasonably good English but seemed to take pleasure in it.

"No," she answered, "it is as home-town and hicky as you can get."

"Home-town and hicky," he repeated. "Hicky is a . . . pustule, a pimple?"

"Just about," said Nancy.

Kittredge, this was the hot core of the evening. The string was thrown across the abyss and now the cord and rope will follow. Indeed, it has. I will tell you in my next letter about the evening with the Masarovs.

My love to you, to Hugh, and to

Christopher,

Harry the Betrothed

In my letter, I had jumped conveniently over the rest of the evening. Nancy was too drunk to eat, so I took her home. Eome proved to be three rooms on the second floor of a modest villa on the Calle Doctor Geraldo Ramon not three blocks from the Embassy. "I think freedom consists of being able to walk

to work in the morning," she told me in most certain, if drunken, terms. She certainly had a second voice installed behind the first. I made the mistake of kissing her.

She kissed back as if we were indeed betrothed and getting married tomorrow. I was discovering that the mouth of a virgin spinster was not like others. Her lips pressed against mine, a family seal upon wax. Her teeth offered the faint odor of dentifrice, mouthwash, and tooth inlay, her breath was like a furnace, and back of that was some baleful neutral zone inspired by her stomach. I had an awful set of impulses I could never have been able to confess to Kittredge. I knew that Nancy Waterston would be mine forever if I chose to lead her along a high sacramental road. My power over another human being would then be not merely large as with Sally, but complete. The centrality of such power stirred something cold and undeniably cruel in me. The image I had had of Hunt's finger stoking her vagina with precise professional strokes became now not his finger, but mine. I had been using him as a cover story for my own impulses. It was then I kissed her a second time on the cheek, assured her that it had been a remarkable evening and perhaps we would visit the Masarovs together, and made my exit much impressed with the power of one

kiss to conduct me right next to the edge of a possible marriage before rejecting such a notion, I hope, forever.

On the way home, I had time to recollect that Sally (not at all witting of Hunt's pro tem matchmaking) had had time to pass me on the lawn, and say, in a husky, shaky whisper which did not promise to maintain integrity for long, "Cheap son of a bitch, you could at least have some taste."

If my second worry was that Sally's voice would begin to rise, my immediate concern was that the Finnish Micks were now photographing her lips. Quickly, I said: "A ploy. Hunt's idea. Don't zoom, Sally," and raised my glass in the salute you give to Company wives in whom you have no interest larger than minimal courtesy.

Only now, driving home, did it occur to me that the Russians must have had at least one camera trained on the garden. They would have seen my face. What would my words communicate to them? "A ploy. Hunt's idea. Don't zoom." I must have given away much too much. On the other hand, it could prove rich in interpretation for Soviet eyes and send them off into far-flung scenarios.

One of Harlot's thoughts now came back to me. Evil, he had once informed me, was to know what was good, and do one's best to destroy it. Whereas wickedness was merely to raise the

stakes when one did not know what one was doing. By that measure, I was wicked. It also occurred to me for a moment that everything we were doing in Uruguay might by that logic be equally wicked, but I also recognized that I did not care. It was agreeable to up the ante without knowing how things were going to turn out. Let no one say that the innocent are always good. I drove on to bed.

January 27, 1938

Dear Mr. [unclear],

I was hoping for a letter from you. Perhaps you were waiting to hear more about the [unclear]. In any event, I feel like writing. I need advice. You see, I'm obliged to report these days each day with [unclear] and [unclear]. These [unclear] and [unclear] [unclear] my [unclear] [unclear] before writing back again.

is not example of the present work. The Groogs and Sourballs decide in concert with that they be advised in the
expected on my decision, either or reject that Sandy should not
accompany me to the Masarow home. Their reasoning, as
reflected by Sant, is that a continuing prosecution of Mike
Masarow and myself as prospective heirs and gods might put
our historic abilities to too great a test--hence, a. sorry,
Sant allowed. I suspect Sant Sant moved up in the first place
by dropping an administrative Officer like Sandy into a case
officer's slot. Of course, Sant never counted on the Russians
coming back so hard and so fast.

At any rate, we qualified Sandy who was sufficiently
disappointed to show "Judge," she said, "oh,
Judge and you-did crackers," so help me, Kittredge, is what she
said. Then, with a sigh and a formal January 27, 1958
she is professional--she went back to advising me more of

Dearest Kittredge,

I was hoping for a letter from you. Perhaps you were
waiting to hear more about the Masarows. In any event, I feel
like writing. I need advice. You see, I'm obliged to report
these days each step taken with Boris and Zenia. Then the
Groogs and Sourballs masticate my cables down to the molecules
before spitting back advice.

As one example of the present work-mode, the Groogs and Scours decide in concert with Hunt (for he refuses to be bypassed on any decision, minor or major) that Nancy should not accompany me to the Masarov home. Their reasoning, as reflected by Hunt, is that a continuing presentation of Miss Waterston and myself as prospective bride and groom might put our histrionic abilities to too great a test--Nancy's, anyway, Hunt allows. I suspect that Hunt messed up in the first place by dropping an Administrative Officer like Nancy into a case officer's slot. Of course, Hunt never counted on the Russians coming back so hard and so fast.

At any rate, we mollified Nancy who was sufficiently disappointed to show chagrin. "Oh, fudge," she said, "oh, fudge and yee-God crackers," so help me, Kittredge, is what she said. Then, with a sigh and a formal professional smile--Lord, she is professional--she went back to auditing one more of Gordy Morewood's Byzantine expense accounts. Poor Nancy--she is so weathered by disappointment.

Meanwhile, I get ready to visit the Masarovs. I call, and, via Hunt's specific instructions, make the date for Nancy and myself. The idea is to keep Zenia at home with Boris. If she knows Nancy is not accompanying me, she may absent herself, too, and Howard is trying to forestall that. It's deemed more

rewarding to get a take on husband and wife together. If the Masarovs are near to a break-up, there may be indications which of the two is more likely to defect, and should they present themselves as a strong, well-knit couple, maybe they'll fly the coop together. Such is our advance reasoning.

The day arrives. I trot over for tea and make my apologies about Nancy's indisposition. They seem disappointed. I cannot help thinking that Hunt was right. If Zenia had known in advance, she might not have been there.

Given the limited supply of desirable real estate in Montevideo, my friendly Russian couple is living in a high-rise apartment house just two blocks further down the Rambla from the similar high-rise which contains our twelfth-floor safe-house. The Masarovs are on the tenth floor, and also have a view through their picture window of Pocitos Beach and the sea. There, all resemblances end. They have truly furnished their place. I do not know if it is to my taste, but they certainly have enough objects to fill the volume. There are heavy velvet drapes looped around the picture window, several fat armchairs and a plump sofa with lace antimacassars, a small oriental carpet on top of a large one, two samovars--one in brass, other in silver--a number of standing lamps with beaded shades, a large piece of mahogany furniture with open glass

cases for the display of their plates and dishes, small casts of heavy nineteenth century sculpture on every table, two bronze maidens, for one instance, with filmy bronze gowns clinging to their half-exposed breasts, then Apollo, standing on the ball of one foot, and gold-framed prints of paintings wherever there is space: Cezanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, plus a couple of Russian painters I do not recognize who portray czars flanked by Russian Orthodox high priests, and nobles dressed half like pirates, half like priests--must be boyars. Done in heavily realistic style, yet not bad. Lights and shadows influenced by Georges de la Tour. In the corner of one painting, a defeated boyar is bleeding to death from a wound in his neck. The agony on his mouth is expressive. I have the passing thought that Russians are well-equipped to delineate the kind of pain that would make more civilized people pass out.

There are also oriental carpets put up as wall hangings, and I count four chess sets, two of which look to be of value. One of the boards is made of inlaid wood.

I can't help contrasting this old-fashioned middle-class opulence with Sherman Porringer's child-scuffed dog-chewed blond-wood furniture and book shelves on bricks. The Masarovs, possessing not all that much space (now that they've filled it)

have converted the hallway that ties together their three and a half rooms into a long, very narrow library. It is a squeeze to get two people to walk side by side, but then both walls are lined with old dark-stained oak book cases. Later, I get to look at Boris' collection of tomes, and will tell you that he reads French, German, English, Spanish, Italian, and several Soviet languages whose names I would not know how to spell. That is a lot for him to have learned, but then he says he is thirty-seven. While this conflicts with the Sourball dossier which pegs him at thirty-two, I must say it adds up. He speaks of the Second World War where he rose to the rank of captain, and the countless framed photographs on a collection of end tables, are certainly there to verify his military career. I do take mental note of the shoulder-board epaulets in these photographs so the Sours can check it out. Of course, I am not able to swear these are World War II snapshots, but they do have the feel of those times, and on one photograph, you can witness for background an incredibly littered city of rubble and jagged artifacts. "East Berlin," he told me, "in the last days. That is why we are smiling."

"Yes, you must have been happy the war was coming to an end."

He shrugged. Suddenly, he was gloomy. "Half-happy," he replied gnomically, but then as if it were not congenial to speak in such fashion to a guest who is in one's rooms for the first time--and we are, indeed, in the first five minutes--he added, "There is always question whether one deserves to be alive. Better men have perished."

"Still, you laugh in photograph," remarked Zenia.

"I am happy," he said, contradicting himself.

"We have meeting two days before," said Zenia. "Borishka and myself. First time."

"You, too, were in East Berlin?" I asked.

"Entertaining troops."

"Zenia is a poet," said Masarov.

"Was," said Zenia.

"She has not written a poem in two years."

"Oh," I said.

"Close to goofy," said Zenia. "Moi."

"Well," I said. (Kittredge, I swear, we have to be as bad as the English when it comes to receiving sudden confession.) "Well, it must be difficult to sit in these well-furnished rooms when one's pen is dry." (To myself, I sounded like the Earl of Phumpherdom.)

The Russians have one virtue, however. They are so abrupt that no deadening remark can keep a half-life of more than three seconds. "Well-furnished?" asked Zenia. "Aggregate. Is aggregate."

I heard aggravate at first, so was, of course, confused, but her next speech brought some clarification. "His family, my family. Aggregate of Moscow apartment--his father; Leningrad apartment--my mother. Remnants of families now complete."

"None of it yours?"

"All mine. All belongs to Boris. Aussi. Also."

"Yes," I said, "and your government shipped it over here for you?"

"Of course," she said, "why not?"

"But your apartment in Moscow must be empty."

She shrugged. "People in it."

They sat me down at this point before the second best chess set and Boris handed me the white pawn. "You are my guest," he said.

Kittredge, you know I am not at all in Hugh's class as a player, but I'm not bad--once I won a low-level tournament of patzers, as modest players are referred to, and in a simultaneous exhibition with a ranked master who was taking on

twenty Yale students at twenty boards, I happened to be one of three who came away with a draw. The other seventeen all lost. All the same, I am, I fear, when it comes to real levels of chess, essentially talentless.

I could sense, however, as soon as we commenced, that the game meant much to him. As if a first whiff of the great international contest for the soul of man had finally entered our mood, I was aware of his tension, and then, reciprocally, of mine. "When in doubt, open with a king's pawn," I said cheerfully to him, and did just that. He nodded curtly, but then was rude enough for the first time--since his manners, as I hope I've indicated, are the best of that whole Russian gang on Bulevar Espana--to sit in his chair and study me openly for a minute. He did not look at the board, rather at my face, my posture, my uncertain smile, my--in short--my emanations. He made me feel as if I were back in the gym at St. Matthew's, and was going to wrestle with the determined-looking fellow at the other end of the mat in just twenty seconds.

"I think," he said at last, "Sicilian Defense is appropriate reply," and he advanced a Queen's Bishop's pawn to the fourth rank. Kittredge, I remember clearly that you spoke once of giving chess up at the age of twelve because you could think of nothing else, and have not gone near a board since. I

"Not at all. Golden Bowl. Perfect symbol for capitalism. Of course, Dzherzhinsky would read such work."

"Boris, ridiculous. Is insult to our guest."

He shrugged. "I apologize," he said, and looked me in the eye. "Prefer Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky?"

"Dostoyevsky," I said.

"Good. Dostoyevsky writes atrocious Russian, but is, in fact, my preference, so we have possibility for friendship."

"First, I must improve my chess."

"Cannot be done," he said. His candor caught me by surprise, and I began to laugh. He soon joined me. He's got this heavy body and prematurely greying hair, much-lined face, one tough guy, but there's an odd youth lurking in the corners of his expression as if he hasn't figured everything out yet.

"Zakushki," said Zenia. "Have zakushki with more tea. Or vodka."

I declined. She protested. Her Alpha and Omega are as separate as one's head and one's foot. Despite an atrocious accent, her voice is deep and suggestive. At public functions, she seems like a mysterious and sensuous woman, exotic, occult, as removed from both of us as an oracle; this afternoon, she is middle-aged, fussy, maternal, the mistress of a small and very bourgeois establishment. I am finding it hard to piece

"Let him read it," says Brishka, "you know you want him to."

They argue in Russian. She yields. She goes to the bedroom and comes back with a sheet of cheap notebook paper. On it, in a somewhat unwieldy hand, she has put this head, Vertigo is Joy.

You can believe after encountering that title, I picked up her offering with no happiness, but . . .let me write it out for you. Lord knows, I've not only got a copy, but can recite it by heart after the workout it was given the Sourballs.

Vertigo is Joy

Our bird passed away in my hand,
its feathers a shroud.

I knew the moment.

Its last heartbeat
spoke to my palm.

Comrade, said bird,
Do not wait in line
to mourn for me.

I fall into depths
that are great heights.

"Better if in Russian," said Zenia, "but cannot find les mots justes. Not for Russian. Words speak from English. Then, Boris gives correct grammar, correct punctuation. Is correct?"

"Yes," I said.

"Is good? Good poem?"

"I think so."

"Zenia is recognized in Russia," said Boris, "although perhaps not recognized enough."

"Is good for printing in America?" asked Zenia.

"Probably," I said. "Let me take it. I have two friends who edit literary magazines."

"Yes," she said, "yours," and folded it into my hand, and looked at me with embarrassing intimacy considering that we were standing there in front of her husband. "Print with pseudonym for me," she said.

"No," said Boris. "Present as the work of a Soviet poet."

"Madness," she muttered.

"I think you might change the title," I said. "It's a little too direct for English."

She would not change her title. She loved the sound. "Am adamant for vertigo," she said. In her pronunciation, it rhymes with tuxedo. Ver -tee -go.

I left after some discussion of when we would visit again. Masarov proposed a picnic with Nancy and me. I agreed. But, by the time that day arrived, Nancy was not on board, and Zenia had decamped for the day. Boris and I went on a picnic together.

I am beginning to rush, however, and would rather wait for a day or two and finish this off with another letter.

February 16, 1958

It was my intent to get back to you a couple of weeks ago. The Sourballs, however, have been taking me through session after session, and I come back to my hotel room each night hoping to empty my head long enough to find sleep. By now, I am one large installment back of myself, so to speak, and in addition, am growing concerned about you. Would you drop me a post-card? It need only say that you are all right. An open post card is safe enough for such a message.

malnourished wild boar. You can imagine how much Howard Hunt takes to Hjalmar ("call me Al") Omaley.

Well, Al Omaley doesn't care one goddamn what anyone thinks of him. He lives to do his work. After a day of interrogating me, he spends his nights with the other Finnish Micks out at the Bosqueverdes (poor Bosqueverdes!). Around the second day of living in his implacably chill company, I recognize that he reminds me of the exterminator who used to come to my mother's Park Avenue apartment on those cheerful mornings when cook discovered cockroaches in the oven and was ready to quit because maid was not washing the grill. I don't want to throw your stomach into the next meal, but Omaley looks like a liquidator ready to leave nothing of our enemy but the last of its bodily seepage. Communists are vermin, Soviet Communists are rabid vermin, KGB Communists are rabid occult vermin, and I had come in contact with the latter.

Now, I exaggerate. Except, I don't. I was queried on what I could remember of the Masarovs' war photographs until I began to feel profoundly guilty that I could not remember more, indeed, I began to wonder at my lack of motivation in memorizing relatively so little. Hjalmar, who must have simmered in sperm-soups of suspicion before being received by the wild-eyed ovum in his mother's womb, led me through endless

rephrasings of each question. I had made the large mistake in my first cable of describing Boris and Zenia as "reasonably agreeable." I had intended to give an objective appraisal, but it stirred frightful concerns in the counter-intelligence gang at Soviet Russia Division. I can tell you that I was interrogated on every aspect of the meeting. Could I remember the exact sequence of moves in the chess game? I did my best to replay the game to their satisfaction but could not connect the opening to our final position. This infuriated Hjalmar Omaley. Apparently, Masarov is so good at chess (at least by their original dossier on him--which, I would remind you, places him at age 32, not 37) that they wanted to see whether he was carrying me in the game; that might indicate whether his motive was to charm me. No, I told them over and over, he came nearer to being unpleasant over our match than at any other occasion in the visit. He had wanted a better contest, and was plainly disappointed. Could he have been testing your temper, Omaley wanted to know?

Then, we catalogued the furniture. The Sourballs are looking into their sources to see if more can be learned about Masarov's father's Moscow apartment and Zenia's mother's Leningrad apartment. After which, they proceeded to interrogate me about the American novels and plays in his

bookcase. How new were the volumes? How well-thumbed? I know they were trying to decide whether he is what he offers himself as being--a Russian official with specialties on American cultural affairs--but my mind began to feel like a lint-filled carpet as it is being vacuumed.

Then, we went to the poem. For the visit, I had been wired with a sneaky, but it only possessed an hour's capacity. While I had halted the machine during each considerable measure of silence in the chess game, the tape was nonetheless finished before we came to the poem. Of necessity, I was asked to reconstruct all dialogue that was not recorded. How much of Vertigo Is Joy, now became the question, was composed by Zenia, and how much by Boris? In what ways did the couple react to my suggestion that the poem was printable in America? Am I certain that she muttered the word, 'madness?'

I won't bore you with how long they spent on "I fall into depths/ that are great heights." (It is, of course, being interpreted as the Masarov offer to defect.)

On the second day, I said to Omaley, "Do you always pursue details this intensively after Agency meetings with Russians?"

He smiled as if only an idiot like myself could ask such a question, but whether I was his idiot for too much, or too

little, is beyond me. I could just as well have been in the dentist's chair while strangers discussed how to proceed.

On the third day, Howard Hunt took me to El Aguila, his favorite restaurant, for lunch. The Sourballs were in an uproar, he confided, over the discrepancy in Boris' dossier. Since my report that he was thirty-seven cast reverberations back into their sources, and certainly gummed up their Soviet Personality Record file, they were damned upset. The question now is whether our present Boris is the original, or a new body? If new, what are the King Brothers up to? Why are they interested in me?

"Can't anything ever happen on its own?" I asked.

"Suppose Masarov is interested in American culture?"

"The playing court," said Hunt, "has to be in another place. Boris wants to defect, or he wants to entrap you."

"He's accomplished the latter. I can't get any of my other work done."

"This will pass," said Hunt. "Your bad mark in Berlin may put a little extra heat on you now, but don't forget, I'm here to balance it. Keep to the positive side of the equation. Get Boris to defect and you will hold all the bouquets." He nodded. "But, buddy, you've got to be more observant next time."

"It doesn't add up," I said. "If Boris wants to come over to us, why would he entertain me and put himself at risk?"

"You're assuming he's a balanced man. Given Zenia's affair with Varkhov, Boris' judgement might be off." Hunt now tasted the first glass of wine from the bottle just opened for him, and made a face. "Joven," he said to the waiter, "esta botella es sin verguenza. Por favor, trae un otro con un corcho honesto."

"To resume," he said to me. "Bottom line: The situation does not add up. If Boris is not the real Boris, then Zenia may not be his wife. In that case, why fraternize with you? What can you give them, Harry Hubbard? Keep on that. Worry over that. Maybe they believe you can offer them something."

"Way beyond me, Howard," I said, but at this moment, I had an image of Chevi Fuertes' face. Could the Russians be witting of AV/OCADO?

"Back to basics," said Howard. "What do we know for certain? It is that Boris, whether Masarov One or Masarov Two, is KGB. At the Montevideo residentura, he is definitely Number Two man under Varkhov."

"Definitely?"

"Heulihaen and Flarrety have studied their films comprehensively enough to establish an authoritative pecking

order. They can document precisely whose ass is exposed to whose beak. Varkhov has precedence over the Soviet Ambassador and his minions. And Masarov is Number Two. Meanwhile, Number One is banging the boobies off the wife of his own Number Two, while Number Two seeks to fraternize with you."

"I'm dreading the picnic," I said. "It's not the picnic. It's the three days with Omaley that are going to follow."

"Get a couple of real pieces of Masarov meat, and I will grind Hjalmar's testes into powder. But do your best to avoid inconclusive results."

Thus armed, Kittredge, thus armed. Zenia phoned to ask if Nancy were coming. When I said that she was still indisposed, Zenia grunted. Zenia would not be with us either.

This morning, which is Sunday--I am finally caught up--Boris and I drove out to the country. He took along his fishing gear, and little else since Zenia had neglected to pack a hamper. I felt wrung out and distracted; so, I suspected, was Boris. We hardly talked. After half an hour on the road, he reached over to his glove compartment and handed me a flask of Scotch which was, under the circumstances, agreeable. On the laissez-passer of the booze, we uttered a word or two.

"Do you like the countryside?" he asked.

"Not much."

Kittredge, this was only my second trip out of Montevideo. In almost a year and a half! I can't believe the fact even as I write this; I am such an underground animal! At Yale, I never left New Haven. Here, all my world is contained within the Embassy, the safe-house, Hunt's villa in Carrasco, and my cheap hotel room. I think it is because everything I do means so much to me that I never notice from month to month how circumscribed are my movements. I saw more of the city in my first three days than in all the time since.

Of course, outside Montevideo, there is not much to look at. Along the sea are third-rate resorts trying to rise to the second level. Stucco debris stirs dust in half-finished villas by the side of the road. Inland, where we were heading now, has gently rolling grassy plains, occasionally fenced-in with cattle, but, over the whole, monotonous.

Masarov speaks out of a silence. "Cuando arriba el Creador en Uruguay, he perdido la mitad de Su interes en la Creacion." We laugh. His Spanish is not as good as his English, but I laugh heartily--partly at the Russian accent in Spanish. It's true. God did lose half His interest in creating the world after He came to Uruguay.

"Yet, I like this country," he says. "Conducive to inner calm."

I am not feeling much of that. The highway has dwindled into a narrow two-lane road, much broken and humped and oil-stained by the weight and effluvia of truck commerce, and when we pull over to have lunch at a cafe cum gas station, it is for the omnipresent hamburgers, the local cerveza, and the smell of rendered beef fat and onions--what Porringer has called "the whore-house full of traffic smell."

Yet, Masarov is known in this cafe. We are apparently near his fishing hole, and he must have stopped here often. I am wondering if these poor roads, flat country, and functional little road-house do not remind him of his native country, and as if we are curiously tuned to one another, he now says on the first sip of beer, "Uruguay is like one small corner of Russia. Is nondescript. I enjoy that."

"Why?"

"When nature becomes awesome, man turns small." He lifts his mug. "Homage to the Swiss!"

"Whereas here, you feel larger than nature?"

"On occasion. You know Uruguayans?"

"Not many." I am thinking, however, of Chevi.

"I don't either." He sighs and lifts his beer. "To Uruguayans."

"Why not?"

We click glasses. We eat in silence. It occurs to me that Boris may be under as much tension as myself. I remember Hunt's injunction: Avoid inconclusive results.

"Boris," I say. "What are we up to?"

"That will develop."

I feel as if I am back in the chess game. Does he long for a book to read while waiting for each of my cautious moves?

"Let me put it," he says, "that I know who you are, and you know who I am."

Now, I have to turn on the sneaky. The switch is in my pants pocket, but the shift of position entailed to get my left hand over (for it is the left hand that has been holding the hamburger) cannot possibly appear as clumsy to him as it feels to me.

"Yes," I say, now that I have pressed the recording button, "you claim to know who I am, and that I know who you are."

He will not keep from smiling at this obvious move. "Of such nature," he replies.

"What does that promise?" I ask.

"That we can have extended discourse."

"Only if we trust one another."

"Half-trust," he says, "is sufficient for discussion."

"Why choose me?"

He shrugs. "You are here."

"Yes."

"You seem cautious," he says.

"Apparently, I am."

He drinks a good portion of his beer at a gulp. "Yet I have more to lose," he says, "than you."

"Well, that," I say, "depends on what you want."

"Nothing," he says.

"Do you want to come over to us?" I ask.

"Are you mad, or clumsy?" he replies in a gentle voice.

Kittredge, I am thinking of how bad this is going to look on the transcript. It will not convey the lack of personal offense he feels. It will, to the contrary, project me as maladroit.

"No, Boris," I say, "I am neither mad nor clumsy. You approach me. Your overtures are friendly. You suggest that we have much to talk about. What can I suppose that to be but an indication of your desire to come over to us?"

"Or a demonstration," he says, "of the absolute ignorance of your people about me and mine."

"Are you prepared to tell me why we are here?"

"It might disappoint you."

"May I be the judge?"

He said nothing, and we sat side by side at our table looking out to the open end of the cafe which had no front window but only an awning which flapped with a sound as sharp as a pistol shot each time a truck went by.

"Let's approach this again," I said. "What do you really want?"

"Political intelligence." He smiled, however, as if to deny the remark.

"I may be more ready to receive than to give."

"It could not be otherwise," he said. He gave a weary sigh. "KGB," he said, "stands for Komitet Gosudarstvennoe Bezopasnosti. The Committee for State Security."

"I know all that," I said. "Even a Foreign Service Officer in the State Department knows that much."

He looked amused that I would still insist on maintaining cover. "Many Directorates exist in the KGB," he said.

"I know that as well."

"Will speak of First Directorate, and Second. First is for Soviet officers abroad; Second for home security. Respectively, like CIA, like FBI."

"Yes," I said.

"Our FBI, Second Directorate, has fine reputation in America. Is seen as very effective. But, by many, in the Soviet Union, is considered stupid. Our First Directorate makes jokes concerning Second Directorate. Wish to hear one?"

"Yes," I said, "I would."

"Of course," he said. "Why not?"

Now, we both laughed. It was droll. We both knew that my sneaky was on, and so everything said, would generate analysis. Each of his remarks would open a family tree of burgeoning possibilities. We quaffed our beer. Down the hatch. He clapped his hands and el patron came forward with two more mugs, and a bottle of vodka. It occurred to me that this cafe could conceivably be a Russian outpost harboring bugs in the wall and a camera cranking away with the KGB's own brand of Finnish Micks behind the lens.

Or--Masarov merely came here often enough for the owner to stock a few bottles of vodka.

Yes, Kittredge, droll. Masarov, with a glass of vodka in his hand, was not unlike other sturdy weathered souls who live for a booze-up--he mellowed quickly.

"Two men," he said, "from Second Directorate, our FBI, are in a car following boy and girl in another car through multitudes of Moscow streets, then zip out to highway. The boy

and girl have been with foreigners they should not, I think, have been visiting, but since they are children of very high officials, are not frightened. Say to each other, 'We ought to get rid of these yeggs, yes?' He stopped. "Yeggs?"

"Perfect use of the word."

"Dumb cops. Yeggs. Yes?"

"Perfect."

"So our boy and girl pull their car over to side of the road. Behind them, other car also stops a hundred meters back. Our brave boy gets out and lifts car hood to indicate motor trouble so that the next passing car will stop to help. What do yeggs do?"

"Tell me," I said.

"Get out of their car," Boris said solemnly. "and lift hood. Copy-cats, yes?"

"Yes," I said, "stupid."

"Our Second Directorate," he said, "has undue complement of stupid people."

"Why do you tell me this?"

"Because your CIA may not distinguish sufficiently between First and Second Directorate. Your CIA sees all of KGB as brutes."

"Oh, that's not true," I said. "We spend weeks analyzing what Dzherzhinsky learned from The Golden Bowl."

Now, he starts to roar. He laughs with a great bellow and smacks me on the back. I don't know whether it's Alpha or Omega, but half of Boris is one hell of a strong man.

"I like you," he says.

"Vertigo is joy," I reply.

We both laugh again. We are practically hugging one another. When the mirth ceases, he is suddenly and powerfully serious.

"Yes," he says, "in First Directorate, we go abroad. We are obliged by our work to study other nations. We become aware, often painfully, of deficiencies in our Soviet system. Within bureaucratic tact, we try to give accurate picture to home base. We search for correct answers to help rectify our great Soviet dream. Yes. Even when answers are ugly because they show is our fault. The leaders of the First Directorate know more of everything wrong in the Soviet Union than anyone in your country."

"That's not the impression we get."

"Of course not. For you, KGB are killers."

"It's a little more sophisticated than that."

"No! Low level! You speak of us as killers. We are professionals. Name one CIA officer who loses one little finger because of us."

"It's the hired help who get it," I said. I was thinking suddenly of Berlin.

"Yes," said Boris, "hired help get all the hell. True for you, true for us."

I was silent. "When do we go fishing?" I said at last.

"Fuck fishing," he said. "Let's drink."

We did. And talked. After a while I began to feel as if he had been waiting all his life to have a dialogue with one American. I was getting to know him so well that it was almost carnal, although entirely without sex, by which I mean that like most Russians he spoke with his face in mine (I suppose it is due to their small crowded apartments) and so I came to know his exterior intimately--the places where his razor had missed some stubble, the spike-hairs in his nose, the breath of hamburgers, Turkish tobacco, onions, vodka, beer, and just enough caries to be, I swear, half-agreeable, as if a touch of rot in the mouth keeps a man honest. Hugh once imparted to me that unforgettable line of Engels--quantity changes quality--well, a touch of bad breath is altogether different from the odor of a badly corrupted mouth. I offer this aside

because I lived for so long at a cafe table with Brishka, as he soon insisted I call him--Brishka and Harry, for sure--that the lunch drank itself down into the late afternoon, and the sun glared out of the west into the corner of our eyes as it dipped below the awning open to the road, and once in a while, a car went by or a drunk wandered in or out.

Masarov must have gone on for an hour about Nikita Khrushchev. Nobody in America could understand the Soviet Union, said Brishka, unless they came to comprehend the Premier. He was a great man. "Great, that is, relative to present situation of Soviet Union." And he recited a litany to me. Countless killed, was the phrase. Countless Russians had been killed in the First World War, countless were also killed in the civil war initiated, he would remind us, by Allies and White Russians, countless had been killed by Stalin in the collectivization of the farms, and countless-countless Soviet soldiers and citizens had been killed by Hitler, countless-countless killed again by Stalin after the war. The Soviet Union had been battered more than "a wife," he said, "who is beaten every day for forty years by an ugly husband. If it were American wife, she would hate such husband. But Russian wife knows better. Underneath everything in such marriage is man's desire for improvement."

"I'm lost," I said. "Who is the Russian wife, and who is the husband?"

"Oh," he said, "obvious. Russian wife is Russia. Husband is the Party. Some days, one must recognize that Russian wife is at fault. She may deserve her beating. Looks at ground. Won't move forward. Husband may be drunk, but looks at sky." He stopped here and slapped himself across the cheek with a blow hard enough to rattle the crockery in the kitchen (if it were listening). "Drunk," he said, and ordered black coffee.

Now his syntax improved. "What I said before is qvatch."

"Qvatch?"

"Of no value. Too general. The relation of Communist Party to people not easy to explain. Soviet children grow up with belief that one becomes a better person by sheer force of the will to be good and unselfish. We try to destroy all interest in enriching ourselves personally. Very hard to do. In my childhood, I would feel ashamed of greedy desires. Weight upon the leader of such a people has to be immense. All trying to be better than they are. Stalin--I am ashamed to confess this--lost inner balance. Then Khrushchev, one of the brave, replaced Stalin. I love Khrushchev."

"Why?" I asked.

He shrugged. "Because he was bad man. And gets better."

"Bad? He was the Butcher of the Ukraine."

"Oh, they teach you. They give you a good course for the winter, Harry. But, they forget spring."

"Who is they?"

"Your teachers. Miss huge crucial point. From the Russian point of view. Cruel people are magnetized by power."

"Isn't that a little beyond Marx?"

"Ultra-Marxist," said Brishka. "Comes from the Russian people. Not Marx. We expect cruel leaders. Our question is whether leaders can transcend their own past. Can become better men. Stalin was great, but Stalin could not transcend. His evil deeds left him crazy. Khrushchev is the opposite." He slapped himself again as if English were about to misprint itself on his tongue, and he had to jar his brain into line with his mouth. His English might be relatively polished, but underneath, Russky Tarzan lurked. As Boris got drunk, I could feel a cruder mode of expression come nearer and nearer to asserting itself. Of course, he would never say "Khrushchev opposite," but you could feel the words he was ready to leave out. "Khrushchev is the opposite."

"Yes," he said, "we must contemplate Khrushchev. He is not wholly popular chez nous. Has many detractors. Some say he is too emotional." Kittredge, you get the idea, I hope.

Only this trace of deformation showed. "Yes," he said, "almost all agree that Khrushchev is nyet kulturny. You comprehend nyet kulturny?"

"I speak no Russian."

"Stick to your story." He laughed at this. Like Zenia, he has two persons in him, and they are not accommodated to one another. He had been drunk, and heavy in his sentiments; now, the irony of the chessmaster leaped out again. "Stick to your story," he said once more, as if he had a clear dossier on me. (Probably he did, and doubtless it was as inaccurate as ours on him.)

"Does nyet kulturny mean 'not cultured?'"

"Of course. Crystal clear. Not cultured. Gross. That is the worst thing you can say of a Russian,"--yes, his good English was still with him. "Hordes of my people lived for centuries in huts where nobody need to wipe his shoes before coming into house. Floors were dirt. Animals slept with family. Nyet kulturny. Crude. Void of high culture. So, Khrushchev embarrasses many. It will sink him yet."

"But he's a great man, you say?"

"Believe me. Gross, brutal, minion of Stalin. Yet, grows in stature. Immeasurable bravery to repudiate Stalin. You should try telling your people of the kind of man

he has become. In Moscow now, the Soviet equivalent of your military-industrial complex, and many high party leaders in league together to say to Khrushchev, 'U.S. has four times more nuclear capacity than Soviet. We are obliged to catch up.' Khrushchev says, 'No need. If U.S. attacks, we answer. Both nations are destroyed. Americans know that. So, no war, will be no war. Our Soviet need is to develop our economy.'

Khrushchev resists huge nuclear military pressure. Khrushchev has become a good man."

"On our side, we find that harder to believe. We think you are responsible for your past, and you don't shake it so quickly."

He nodded. "That is because you are full of corporate capitalism. Linear. Unilinear people in corporation." He took a large swallow of his black coffee which was thick as filtered mud, and nodded. "Yes," he said, "Americans never understand how we work in Communist Party. You say we live in total relation to ideology. Your grave error. Miscalculation by corporate capitalism which lives in total relation to ideology, wholly so, but we, who are--you call us--slave people, are more individual."

"I believe you really think that."

"Of course. No two Russians alike. All Americans, to me, it seems, are same."

"In no way could this be a misapprehension on your part?"

He touched my elbow in amelioration. "All corporate capitalist Americans. Managers. Executive class. They believe American ideology. We believe ours, but only by half."

"By half?"

"By half, Harry, you bet." Again, his heavy hand clapped me on the back.

"And the other half?"

"Our secret half. There, we brood."

"Brood over what?"

"Our soul. We taste it. We can taste our soul because are losing it. American people speak of free-floating anxiety, yes? Lack of identity, yes? Search for integrity--correct? But Russian says: I am losing my soul. Americans used to be like Russians back in the Nineteenth Century. When individual entrepreneurs. Then, was more of the baroque spirit. In your hearts. In American architecture. Individual people, eccentric. Now you are all corporate capitalists. Brainwashed."

There was a glint in his eye at the expression on my face. "Khrushchev does not want to lose his soul," Masarov said, "therefore, works hard to improve the world."

"You tell me all this with a straight face?" I confess I was getting angry at such consummate gall.

"Of course. Why not?"

"Tell me about your prison camps."

His good mood vanished. "The Russian Bear," he said, "has dinosaur's tail. Tail crawls with infestations from the past. Eventually, will absorb our horrendous history. But as of now, immense convulsions. Tragedies. Horrors. Still."

I could hardly believe he had said this much. He was scowling at his coffee as if it had been a mistake to leave his old comrade-in-arms, vodka, for this new acquaintance. Then he gave a great sigh as if to clean his breath of old memories.

"Do you know about beriozhka?" he asked. "Birch trees."

"Yes. You are all said to love them."

"Yes." He nodded. "Zenia wrote a beautiful poem in Russian about the beriozhka. I translated it into English. With liberties, however. Zenia would not recognize it. She would leave me." He looked as if he were about to cry, but instead took out a piece of paper and read aloud to me.

To the birches

pale sentinels
silent arrows
light and moonlight
our silver sun

"Uruguay is not like Russia," he said. "Are no birches here."

Then he tore off the unmarked bottom half of the sheet on which the poem was written, scribbled a note upon it for me, and passed it over. The wording, Kittredge, (and you will see why) is offered to you from memory.

"Caution. Just as one of ours may be, in secret, yours, so one of yours, may be ours. Do not trust the people in your Soviet Russia Division. Such remarks can hang me. Silence. Caution. Speak only to your most trusted own."

I had time to read it carefully before he whipped back the note and held it in his hands. I do not know if I was inhabiting his mind at that point, but I did envision him setting this half sheet of paper on fire in the ashtray, which I swear to you, he proceeded to do just then, as if I had

either willed him to do it, or had read his mind before he expressed it.

Kittredge, that was indeed the curious tone on which we left the cafe and took the drive back to Montevideo in the late summer dusk of February in the lands of el cono sur. It is so late now, and I am weary, but we are, at last, caught up.

Devotedly,

Harry

felt alone, and, as matter how uncomfortable, to keep the
experience intact.

I was in a dilemma, however. "Do not break the circle in
your Soviet Union Division," was a desperate attempt to bring
the. Since I now had no evidence of Boris' note other than my
personal description of it, I was bound to be seen eventually
as the untrustworthy author of a wholly distorting
communication. If the SIS had designed the afternoon so that I
would bring back a message to Hjalmar and Soviet Union
Division, it might be prudent not to mention the note.

Of course, there was the real possibility that a Soviet
censor had been installed behind one or another telephone in the
hall or sitting of the note. -55- recording the moment when
Boris passed his written message over to me, and I read it, and

It was understood that I would call Howard so soon as I
came back from the picnic, but I found myself in a peculiar and
rebellious state. I did not wish to be debriefed into the late
hours of Sunday night. Instead, I chose to write to Kittredge.
It was as if my best hope of understanding what had taken place
between Masarov and myself could be obtained by setting it down
for her. I knew that once my report was perused by Hjalmar
Omaley, converted to cable traffic, and subjected to the Soviet
Russia Division's questionnaires, it would be lost to me, and I

felt some need, no matter how unprofessional, to keep the experience intact.

I was in a dilemma, however. "Do not trust the people in your Soviet Russia Division," was a dangerous remark to bring in. Since I now had no evidence of Boris' note other than my personal description of it, I was bound to be seen eventually as the untruthworthy bearer of a wholly disturbing communication. If the KGB had designed the afternoon so that I would bring back a message to disrupt our Soviet Russia Division, it might be prudent not to mention the note.

Of course, there was the real possibility that a movie camera had been installed behind one or another peephole in the wall or ceiling of the cafe, and was recording the moment when Boris passed his written message over to me, and I read it, and he incinerated it in the ashtray, both of us watching solemnly. In such a case, if I did not report the incident, my next question obviously had to be whether the KGB people would be able to learn of such an omission. Who among us might tell them? I began to wonder whether we could trust Gordy Morewood. or depend on Sherman Porringer not to talk to his whores? "Keep a cool head," I told myself. These suspicions seemed, on balance, improperly speculative.

Then it occurred to me that if there were a mole in the Soviet Russia Division, he would be in excellent position to get a look at my report on the picnic. If I neglected to mention Masarov's message, did have a photographic record of the transaction, I would be prey to blackmail. Or, if I resisted such blackmail and confessed my misdeed to the Agency, I would certainly be cashiered.

I decided to state in my report, therefore, that the note had been passed to me; I would, however, leave out the single reference to the Soviet Russia Division. If the intent of the KGB was to increase our suspicion of our own people, the remaining contents of the note would prove so vague as to have minimal effect.

Of course, if there had been a Soviet camera in the ceiling, equipped with a telephoto lens, such an apparatus could have recorded Masarov's text even as I was reading it. Most unlikely, I decided. Such methods had to be recondite for a KGB station in Uruguay. I might as well accept the risk.

Why? As if someone had poked a rude finger into my stomach, the question hit with force. Why, indeed? Why not tell the truth? If it disrupted the Soviet Russia Division, well, they had suffered, no doubt, in such fashion before. Yet I knew I would not change my mind. Not only was living in