

close quarters with Al Omaley much like cohabiting with a contagious disease, but I did not feel ready to face his meticulous paranoia. He would, as a matter of course, immediately assume I was of questionable loyalty. I, the messenger, had to be tainted by the message.

All the same, my private motive remained inaccessible to me. Some curiously stubborn depth of instinct was speaking.

It was now ten o'clock on Sunday night, and one could put off calling Howard Hunt no longer. I went down to the street and found a pay phone. On the Avenue of the Eighteenth of July the night was as quiet as a midnight Tuesday in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

"Where in hell have you been?" was his opening remark.

"Getting drunk with our friend."

"Until now?"

"A confession, Howard. I got back to the hotel at eight, started to call just to say that I was back, and would ring again from downstairs in ten minutes, but, so help me, I fell asleep with the phone in my hand."

"Oh, no."

"Did you ever match vodka for vodka with the Russians?"

"Yes. And successfully. Don't you know enough to drink olive oil before you start?"

"Well, maybe I do now."

"All right. One question. Was it conclusive?"

"Not wholly affirmative on that."

"Shit."

"A fair amount of stuff, all the same."

"Enough to begin an all-night session right now?"

"I doubt it."

"Then, I will let it keep till tomorrow. But you get over to the Embassy now. Nancy is waiting to type up the tape."

"Well, yes."

"Hang around to help her with garbled transmission."

"Of course."

"I know this is open wire, boy, but give a clue. What was our friend up to?"

"Wiser minds than mine will determine that."

"Any chance of your buddy riding down the river with us?"

"Twenty per cent possibility."

"Twenty per cent," repeated Hunt. I could picture his study at Carrasco; I could all but hear his long fingers tapping on the desk. "That's a disappointment," he said.

"Our friend is still a source," I told him. "A few surprising flowers in the nosegay."

"We'll be busy tomorrow," said Hunt. "Get some sleep."

"I intend to--after the next three hours with Nancy."

"That's all right, Harry. You were snoring it off while I was pacing my study worrying over what to say at your grave."

My relations with Nancy, during the hours it took to transcribe the tape, proved as formal as the muted after-effect of our single kiss. Since that had been succeeded by no further affection from me, a deeper void in her relations with men had to be the natural result. If I formulate such an equation, it is because I had not seen Sally Porringer since our small if desperate conversation at the garden party, and so was feeling the absence of any woman in my life. Compassion for Nancy, nonetheless, seemed a poor substitute for desire.

By two in the morning, the transcript was done, and so was my accompanying report. I went back to the hotel, while Nancy, loyal to the code of all the unsung soldiers, was still sending out text on the encoding machine. Our five letter groups would be deciphered by communications people in Washington before the dawn.

Hjalmar Omaley, whether alerted by Hunt, or paranoically instinctive, came in by some twenty minutes in advance of my departure, a precise timing which enabled him to read my report and go through the transcript just as Nancy was finishing the last page. He had the oddest style of perusal. Reminiscent

of the way General Gehlen used to mutter over the chessboard, he all but crooned into the contents. "Holy hooligans, Hjalmar, holy hooligans," he kept saying as he read, but whether this was praise for the operation or astonished disapproval, I had small idea. Just as I was leaving, Nancy, quick as a bird darting into the eaves, (for I was not supposed to see it) flashed one tender and not wholly unbedazzled smile at Hjalmar. It seemed to me then that I would be wiser to worry over the empty space in my own heart rather than any void in the affective life of others.

By the middle of Monday morning, it was clear what the week would bring. Howard was in a state of great excitement. The Sourballs had succeeded in closing the discrepancy between Masarov One and Masarov Two. Their Soviet Personality Record dossier was now in order. While Hunt would not, or could not, provide me with more detail than to say, "Masarov Two is who we have here, and he is thirty-nine, not thirty-seven. Get set for this: He is higher echelon than we thought. Considerably above Varkhov in rank."

"I thought the Finnish Micks had concluded Boris was Number Two."

"They did, but the Sovs may have been sending contrived signals. It's a kangaroo pouch."

I had never heard the expression but then the metaphor was not difficult to unfold--obviously he spoke of an operation where the number one man is concealed.

"What of Zenia and Varkhov?" I asked.

"In for reappraisal. Could be pure Stanislavsky. One thing is nailed down, though. The Masarov here in Uruguay is one of the leading KGB experts on America."

"Why, then, is he in these parts?"

"That may be the focal enigma, may it not?" said Howard.

If my visit to the home of Boris and Zenia had subjected me to more cross-examining than I ever wished to face again, the Soviet Russia Division now kept me busy through an eighteen hour day of debriefing with Hjalmar, followed by two eighteen-hour days in a row answering questionnaires from Washington. More than once, I came close to confessing what I now called (in the last redoubts of the privacy of my mind) "The Abominable Omission." The questionnaires certainly kept coming back to the contents of Boris' note. What certainty could I submit that the message, as recollected by me, was complete? 60%? 70%? 80%? 90%? 95%? 100%? I made the mistake of answering 80%. As if they were psychically attuned to the topography of culpability, the Sourballs follow-up question stated: In your reconstruction, the note has three

full statements plus three one-word exhortations. If recall is 80% complete, what is the possibility that a fourth sentence is missing?

To which I replied: zero possibility.

Repeat query: 50%? 40%? 30%? 20%? 10%? 5%? 0%?

Zero possibility.

Boris note lacks concerted impact. How do you account for that?

I was sitting at a typewriter console hooked up to our encoder-decoder. An encrypted question would come in from Washington, go through the decoder, activate the keys of my typewriter, and come out in deciphered five-letter groups on my typewriter page which I could read, by now, as quickly as plain text. BORIS NOTEL ACKSC ONCER TEDIM PACT didn't cost me one-tenth of a second more. Then, so soon as I typed out a reply to the comment, my five-letter groups would commence their trip back through the same typewriter and encoder-decoder to the Sourballs back in Cockroach Alley. I would sit and wait for my typewriter to commence clacking again. After hours of such back and forth, I could hallucinate at will. I would see a barnyard where chickens were gathering to be fed. Typewriter keys became seeds. Each time I cast them into the barnyard, a

tattoo of typewriter flurry began to tap back, and the hens gobbled up the seeds.

At other times, I would believe I was playing chess with an opponent in another room. Over my shoulder, Hjalmar Omaley read the questions that came in and the answers that went back. Occasionally he served as moderator.

On this last comment: Boris' note lacks concerted impact, I turned to him.

"What is that supposed to mean?"

He had a smile to irritate me. His lips and teeth would gleam in disconcerting balance to the gleam that came off his eyeglasses. "It means," said Hjalmar, "precisely what it says."

This annoyed me sufficiently to type for my reply exactly what I had said to him. WHATD OESTH ISMEA N

PRECI SELYW HATIT SAYS came back.

"All right, we have a problem," I said. "I can't comment, if I don't know what I'm replying to."

At Yale, I had always detested the superior sort of graduate student who looked like Hjalmar Omaley. They invariably comported themselves with a curious torturing of their hands and ankles which were always deployed at odd angles. Their necks were invariably cocked to the side. They

listened to you with the same half-smile they manifested when they spoke. They appeared to be forever sniffing the inferior odor of your turds as compared to the integrated concert of their own. They would answer inquiries with half-questions. They would reply with such throwaways as precisely what it says. When, however, they finally took account of what you asked, they left you in no doubt of their detailed credentials. "We have under consideration," said Hjalmar, "a high echelon member of the KGB, expert in American studies, who dallies with a minor case officer in a country with small to negligible geopolitical impact. Said KGB officer then proceeds to incriminate himself to said minor case officer by dint of extreme remarks, allusions, and unorthodox comparisons of his country and party to a sordid husband and wife. He abuses Marxist tenets. All such product would guarantee, at the least, his recall, and imprisonment if we were to forward transcript obtained to the KGB and they were to believe it. Do you follow me now?"

"Yes."

"Good. Since he is, however, heading up the KGB cadres here, his own transcript, if he has one, need not be of concern to him. He has obviously been given sanction. There are elements in the KGB who do have sanction to speak freely and,

on occasion, act freely. Such post-Neanderthals can be seen as the equivalent of 17th Century Jesuits. Are you still following me?"

"Yes."

"Good. We now encounter the specific implausibility of the entire situation. To summarize what I have just said: A major KGB operative who, so far as we can see, has no intention of defecting, nonetheless engages in major conversational indiscretions with the opposition. If there is an entelechy in his process--and there must be entelechy, or else, why commence?--he succeeds in presenting a note which is destroyed almost as soon as it is delivered. That would be a dubious business serving small purpose unless the message had incisive content. It has, however, despite the unusual circumstances, virtually nothing substantive. It names no person, and attacks specifically none of our departments. In sum, it is too general to be disruptive. He has given you a shovel without a handle. What explanation do you offer?"

I was about to reply, but he said, "Wait," and turned on a tape recorder placed next to the encoder-decoder. "Speak your piece into that little microphone."

I would have been better off with the typewriter-encoder-decoder. The position of the recorder

placed my back to Omaley, and I could feel his malign presence leaning in full psychic drapery upon my shoulders.

"Repeat your question," I said.

"What explanation do you offer of your meeting?"

"I think we are dealing with a man rather than a scenario."

"Expatriate."

"I'm not as certain as all of you that Masarov has a clear message to pass on to us. If he is the Number One man, and his wife is indeed in love with Varkhov who now it seems is his assistant, I believe that could prove disorienting to his behavior."

"Masarov is ruthless, skillful, and highly capable of discharging ultimate functions. It is difficult to believe that his marital troubles, if bona-fide, would prove unsettling. In 1941, at the age of twenty-two, as a young officer in the NKVD, he was present in the Katyn forest during the Soviet massacre of the Polish officers. He is a man, therefore, who has shot others in the back of the head." Standing behind me, Hjalmar did tap me lightly on the head.

Could I place Boris into this new portrait? My stomach was reacting. "Katyn Forest helps to explain his appraisal of Khrushchev," I said.

"To employ Masarov's own terminology-- qvatch. An attempt to beguile you, misdirect you, have you, in short, follow the wrong shell in his game."

"If you know all of it, why do you keep questioning me?"

"'Boris note lacks concerted impact.' Try replying to that now with the E-D."

I turned to my typewriter and sent the following into the Encoder-Decoder.

ICANN OTDOA NYTHI NGTOR ESOLV ETHIS IMPAS SEIWI LLALT
ERMYE STIMA TEOFP ROBAB ILITY OFREC COLLEC TIONO FTHEN OTEFR
OM80% TO95%

There was a long pause. Omaley sat there shaking his head slowly from side to side like a metronome oscillating alone in a vault. It was late at night and we were the only two people left in our wing of the Embassy.

"FINAL" asked the E-D.

"FINAL," I typed back.

This time the pause was short. DOYOU AGREE TOTAK INGAL
IEDET ECTOR TEST

Omaley looked happy for the first time in three days.

INPRI NCIPL EYESP ROVID EDJUR ISDIC TIONA LHEGE MONIE
SDONO TOVER RIDET HEPRI NCIPL E

"In principle, yes," read Hjalmar over my shoulder, and very much aloud, "provided jurisdictional hegemonies do not override the principle." He laughed aloud. "What would you suppose are the probabilities that your Chief of Station will enable you to avoid the flutter-box? 50%? 40%?"

There was a high-pitched note so hateful in his voice that I came very close to hitting him. I was still smarting from the tap on the back of my head.

...and saying, "I want all the information I can get on this one, however. Are you really the sure of your majority about this matter? That's what ticked them off, you know. You can't get cheeky with their evaluation process. It's like defiling the Truth or the Honor." He looked most carefully at me. "Between us, may we inquire, what is your real estimate?"

"Sir."

"Oh. I have to say that. But why is Kharuk's message so important? The name of the game is to name the name."

"Howard, I got it in my report. I have a theory that we can give evidence to. Just a couple of weeks ago, on February 2, Bulgaria asked for a ... meeting. Presumably, that's to be between Eisenhower and ... and Kharukov. I think Kharukov would be to have a message. I think the Russians are

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"Preposterous," said Howard next morning, "outrageous. You have been doing your top level best to stay afloat with a KGB heavyweight, and they want a flutter test because they are not happy with the results? You are absolutely right. This is jurisdictional. I'm not letting any paranoid peacocks drive a truck right through the middle of my Station.

"I'm ready to take the test if it comes to it," I said.

"Glad you said that, but I'm here to protect my people fully as much as I am ready to expose them to appropriate

risk-taking." He paused. "I want all the tarps tied down on this one, however. Are you really 95% sure of your accuracy about this note? That's what ticked them off, you know. You can't get cheeky with their evaluation process. It's like defiling the Torah or the Koran." He looked most carefully at me. "Between us, cozy as thieves, what is your real estimate?"

"90%."

"OK. I have to buy that. But why is Masarov's message so anaemic? The name of the game is to name the name."

"Howard, I put it in my report. I have a theory that no one gives credence to: Just a couple of weeks ago, on February 2, Bulgarin asked for a summit meeting. Presumably that's to be between Eisenhower and Bulganin and Khrushchev. I think Masarov wanted me to bear a message. I think the Russians are sending the same political message in a thousand different ways all over the world. 'Give the summit a try, Khrushchev is okay.' That's a big part of their personal propaganda approach right now."

"All right. Those lines of possibility stand out in the transcript. But why confuse matters? What did Boris intend by the note? He's an old pro. He knows the cardinal differences between a clandestine scrap of handwriting and a political pitch--which, by the way, I don't trust for one minute--those

Sovietskys don't want peace ever, just a breathing space to find a new way to screw us." He paused. "But, all right. Boris gives his pitch. We can all cry for the Soviet Union. Countless-countless killed. Yes, and how about the five thousand Polish officers Masarov helped to shoot in the back of the head, and the other ten thousand Polish officers that remain missing? Stalin knew what he was doing. He was killing the cadres of a possible future independent Poland, yeah, those Sovs want peace--I'll believe that when pimps stop taking their cut." He tapped his desk as if it were a podium and he was making a speech with well-chiselled emphasis.

"You ought to be in politics, Howard," I said.

"I could have been in many things. I could have made a fortune in real estate. It's in the blood. My old man was a crackerjack lawyer, but he also showed a hot hand in real estate until the 1929 came along. It kills me to look at the properties on the Rambla these days, not even to get into what you could develop out in Carrasco, yes, Harry, we pay a stiff price for giving our allegiance to the Company. A CIA man makes a whole financial sacrifice for life. Let's not kid ourselves. We aren't kind to ourselves."

"You do know a lot of terms for money."

"Money speaks in all languages. So do we. We're CIA.
It's our duty to be encyclopedic on many a matter."

"Yessir."

"Explain that note to me, will you?"

"Howard, I think Boris was dead drunk and full of misery, half ready to defect and knows he won't--unless he does--he's a Russian, after all, he's half crazy, he loves his wife, he's sinking in guilt, he has a lot on his conscience, he wants to save his soul, and if you add it all up, he must be very self-destructive. He loves Dostoyevsky. I think he wanted to lacerate himself a little with that meaningless note, but then he changed his mind."

"So you buy his speech at face value?"

"I think I do. Why else write a meaningless note?"

"God, you're young."

"I guess I am."

Actually, I was amazed at the felicity with which I could lie. How much of my mother was in me after all. For the first time I understood the pleasure she used to take in her little creations. Lies were also a species of spiritual currency.

"Well, I'm going to bat for you," said Howard.

"I appreciate that."

"Kid, do you have any idea how expensive this might be for yours truly?"

"In that case, I ought to take the flutter-box," I said.

"Knowing how those guys work, Hjalmar is probably authorized to administer it."

"All in his day's work."

"Of course," said Howard, "this is my Station."

"I think a lot of people up and down the line will respect you for taking a tough stand."

"Yes. How much won in respect, and how much lost to future deep-dyed, unalloyed enmity. Yes. Tell me, Harry, why are you reluctant to take the test?"

"I'll take it, Howard. I'm ready to. I'm innocent. It's just that they get you feeling so goddamn guilty once they put those electrodes on."

"Say that again. I remember my indignation when they asked me if I were homosexual. Years ago. I still remember it. I controlled myself long enough to say no--when in doubt, observe the proprieties--but, I tell you, fellow, if any man was ever crazy enough to try to put his pecker in my mouth, and I don't care if that man is a buck nigger, six feet six inches tall, I would still bite his masterpiece off at the root. So, yes, I can hook on to your feelings. I hate lie detectors too.

We'll stop those bastards right where they live up on High-Faluting Heights, which is a street in Cleveland, you know."

Laughing with him, I caught a whiff of his breath. He had had a few belts, and that was certainly not his habit for the morning. He was one Station Chief who did observe the proprieties. It was possible that he was more agitated than me. I felt the beginnings of some splendid strength in myself as if I might yet prove one of the select with nerves as fine as threads of steel.

Howard left the office soon after to keep a date for lunch with one of his Uruguayan friends. "I'm going to get you out to Hernando's estancia," he promised. "We're cooking up some big-game politics." He winked. "Don't worry about the lie detector. I'm going to hold the line."

As if to show his trust in me, he quit his office while I was still in it. That was not customary. He usually locked his door. Now, he merely left it ajar so that Nancy Waterston could certainly check on whether I was looking into any of his desk drawers. Just then, the safe-phone in the locked closet began to ring.

"Nancy," I said, "do you hear that?"

She did after a moment.

"I think," I told her, "we had better answer it. Do you have a key?"

She did. She made a point of unlocking the closet door herself. By the time she lifted the receiver, there had been twelve rings. "Yes," she said, "he's here. Who wishes to speak to him?" A pause. "Oh, it's classified. Oh, I'm afraid I don't know the protocol on classified safe-phone referrals." Meanwhile, she was stabbing her finger directly into the air between us. "For you," her finger was saying.

"I'll take it," I said.

"I don't know," she said, covering the mouthpiece, "who is asking for you."

"Never fear. It's more routine than you'd expect."

"I don't know," she repeated, "who is asking for you."

"Nancy, I could, if necessary, tell you what this is all about, but I won't. You are interfering with a priority."

"All right," she said, then added as she handed me the phone, "It's a woman."

"Hello," I said into the mouthpiece.

"Is that other person standing at your elbow?" said Kittredge in my ear.

"More or less."

"Banish her."

"It'll take some doing."

"All the same!"

"Nancy," I said, "this is a safe-phone. I'd like privacy. That is the designated purpose of safe-phones."

"Only intended for use," said Nancy, "by the Chief of Station."

"In his absence, I have entitlement. This involves something co-developed by Howard and me."

Nancy receded, but grudgingly, like a tide not yet ready to accept its retreat back from high water. She left Howard's office with the door still ajar. I, in turn, did not feel ready to close the closet door. Nancy, under these exceptional circumstances, might feel emboldened to creep back in and listen at the key-hole. So, through two half-opened doors, we managed to keep an eye on each other even as I spoke in the lowest tones.

"Are we clear?" asked Kittredge.

"Yes."

"Harry, I love your letters. I know I haven't been responding lately, but I love them. Particularly the last one. It's invaluable."

"Are you all right?"

"Couldn't be better. It's all turned around now. I'm in splendid shape."

"Terrific."

Her voice, however, was coming to me out of the long reverberations of the secure phone. All I could determine about her state of being was that she was speaking awfully quickly.

"Yes," she said, "I want your permission on a small but precise fabrication."

"You've got it," I said. After all, given the ever-increasing volume of Abominable Omission, why deny the small and precise?

"I'm not ready to inform Hugh we're corresponding, because that would upset much too much, but I do ask for your permission to tell him that you were sufficiently concerned by what took place on your Soviet picnic to place a call to Hugh's secure phone. He was out, I'll say, and so you told me all. Then you and he can get together tonight on this same lovely red phone."

"The first thing wrong with your proposal," I said, "is that this call has already ticked off a nasty response. Unless I can come up with a feasible explanation, I'll never be able

to get a second call out tonight on my lovely red phone, which, incidentally, dear lady, is housed in a stifling closet--"

"Don't talk so much," she said, "there's an off-putting echo."

"The second difficulty," I said, "is that I don't believe you. I think you've told Hugh already."

"I have," she said.

"About my last letter?"

"No, never the letter. About Masarov's crazy note. Your letter arrived yesterday, yes, yesterday, Tuesday, and I made up the story of your phone call, said it was at 3 P.M., and Hugh was sufficiently exercised--"

"Speak more slowly. Did you say exorcised?"

"Exercised, not ex-or-cised. Hugh tapped into his illicit communication over at Soviet Russia Division, and, yes, the Sourballs are agog. Darling boy, you must have tampered with the message. Hugh gave me the wording they have and what you put in the letter. Now, they must be trying to sweat the last gamma globulin--"

"Slower, please."

"Not getting their last bit of fat, are they?"

"No." Pause. "What does Hugh think of what I did?"

"Thinks you're an instinctive genius."

"Does?"

"Oh, Harry, it just occurred to me. When you speak to Hugh, get our little story straight. When you phoned me yesterday, it was after your editorial work on the note, but you did impart the original contents verbally to me."

"Yes, I'll keep the new chronology in place," I said.

"I think you're wonderful. I don't even know why you've done what you're doing, but if Hugh looks upon you as inspired, I will not argue with the mighty panjandrum. However, that's not what's at issue. Now, dear beloved younger cousin, I'm wondering how you and my spouse will dare to speak if you can't get a secure phone?"

"I guess," I said, "that Hugh should ring me at eleven o'clock tonight," and I gave the number of a street phone near my hotel that I often used to call Chevi Fuertes.

"Is it virgin?" she asked.

"Hell, no."

"Then select some pay phone you've never used before for the serious call. Then phone us at home around eleven tonight on any other pay phone. Hugh will pick up. Don't speak to him by name. Just give the color code for the selected phone and hang up. Of course, you had better skew the color code."

"By how many digits?"

"Choose a number."

"Four. . ."

"I just picked two. Make it three then," Kittredge said.

"Three."

"Skewed by three."

"Shouldn't it be a continuing skew?"

"Agreed."

"By the way, only six digits on phones here, not seven," I said. "And I will call at eleven o'clock. If I can't make it, then by midnight."

"Agreed," she said.

"By the way, they want to put me in the flutter box."

"Hugh will certainly try to get you out of that."

"How?"

"Well, through his illicit person, I would say."

"His illicit person throws that much weight?"

"Harry, be content. We've talked of cabbages and kings, and now I bless all your lowly things, oh, Harry, isn't that the worst doggerel, but I love it because I just made it up, and I'm blushing. Goodbye, dear brothel boy." She hung up before I could say goodbye.

It was a long afternoon and made more nervous by thoughts of the skew. My recall of the color code for phone numbers was

still absolute--on that I could feel well-trained. 0 was white, 1, yellow; 2, green; 3, blue; 4, purple; 5, red; 6, orange; 7, brown; 8, gray; 9, black. A full skew turned zero into 9, 1 to 8, 2 to 7, and so forth. A skew of three changed 3 to 9, 4 to 8, 5 to 7 6 to 6, 7 to 5, and so forth. But continuing skew was a misery, for the first digit in the telephone number was skewed by three, the next by three more, or six, the third by nine, the fourth by three again, the fifth by six again, the sixth by nine once more. It could take two or three minutes with pencil and pad to encode such a shift of numbers and one didn't dare do it in one's mind, for errors, all too easy to make, were nonetheless unforgiveable. The virtue of the continuing skew, however, was that anyone tapping in on the first conversation who was familiar with the color code would still, if they did not know the continuing skew, need several hours to break down the number. By then, presumably, the pay phone would have been used and never employed again.

Hunt returned from lunch and locked his door. I surmised he was on the phone to Washington. Then he called in Hjalmar Omaley who looked expressionless when he came out. It took no great acumen to recognize that the demand by SR division for a lie detector test was going to be decided around the Reflecting

Pool back in Washington. The Encoder-Decoder was certainly silent.

Porringer went home at five, ditto Gatsby, and Nancy Waterston quit at six which was as early as she had left in several weeks. Hjalmar soon followed; I had the idea he and Nancy would meet for dinner tonight.

Hunt stopped at my desk as he was leaving. "What was that secure phone call about? More illness in the family?"

"Yessir."

He lost his temper. Mean storm warnings passed across his face. "I don't want you using the red box again."

"I won't."

He slammed out of the office. I understood his fury. It was all going to be settled on high, and he had agreed to that. We would not protect the encampment with our wagons after all. Nothing was going to be lost by Howard to "future, deep-dyed, unalloyed enmity."

Alone in the office, I felt gainfully employed for the first time since Sunday afternoon. My regular meeting with Chevi Fuertes was scheduled for Friday at the safe-house, and I had to go over his file. Then my accounts with AV/ALANCHE, sadly screwed-up. I had not been out with them in two weeks and they were in a state of disarray from a couple of bloody

street fights. My undone account books concerned not only AV/OCADO and AV/ALANCHE, but AV/OUCH-1, AV/OUCH-2 and AV/ERAGE, all on my desk to be brought up to date for Nancy Waterston. As I sat alone in the office I could even feel AV/ERAGE, my homosexual society journalist, sulking because I had not met him this week for tapas and a drink. Yet the thought of all these unaccomplished tasks was curiously soothing as if I could wrap them about myself like a dressing against the raw adrenalin of the last three days.

That evening, after choosing the location of a phone for the conversation with Harlot, I ate alone in a trucker's cafe in the Old City, an uneasy but pleasureable anticipation suffusing itself into my broiled meats and wine. I realized that I could not have been entertaining myself more if I were getting ready to meet a new woman in a hotel room. I obtained from the waiter a fistful of change and my pants pocket, on leaving the restaurant, lolled concupiscently against my thigh.

By ten-thirty, I had chosen the phone booth for the first call, and at ten of eleven, I called the international operator, gave her the number of the Stable in Georgetown, and deposited my coins. When I heard Harlot's voice, I said, "In front of a yellow wall is a white table with a purple lamp. A

man in a brown jacket, yellow pants, and red shoes is standing. There is no chair."

"Repeat in brief," said Harlot's voice.

"Yellow, white, purple, brown, yellow, red." That would convert to 10 47 15.

"Twelve to fifteen minutes," said Harlot and hung up.

10 47 15 was only the immediate conversion. Calculated for a continuing skew of three, it would come out to 15 45 45.

I had chosen to receive the second telephone call in an agreeable neighborhood bar of reasonable decorum. It had two phones in private booths and thereby offered less likelihood of offending any impatient lover who might have to stand on tiptoe if our conversation should take a while. Indeed, I was in the booth for five minutes with the phone up to my ear as if I were already using it (and simulating a conversation) while my other hand was pressing on the hang-up lever so that the apparatus would be able to ring.

In the fourteenth minute after our first abbreviated exchange, it did.

"Well," said Harlot, "you are going through quite a rigamarole merely to receive my congratulations."

"It has been interesting," I said.

"Time-consuming. But now, the hygiene. No names of personal address between you and me. For purposes of clarity, I will accept organizational names. If, for any reason, we disconnect, hold your place and I will call again. If you don't hear in five minutes, wait until midnight. I'll call then."

"Make it eleven-forty," I said. "This place shuts down at midnight. I've asked."

"Good fellow. Now, purpose of my call. Verification. There is no doubt in your mind that your drinking pal named the Soviet Russia Division?"

"Zero doubt," I said.

"Why did you not report it?"

"My drinking partner had obviously set me up to do so. I thought I'd spike his game."

"That was presumptuous of you."

I was beginning to wonder if the praise would take its own good time to arrive.

"I can only say that my deepest instinct told me to follow such a course," I said.

"You had a hunch?"

"Yes."

"What was the hook in the hunch?"

"That you would want me to follow such a course."

"This is amazing," said Harlot. "Do you know, you're absolutely correct. If you had consulted me, I would have told you to do just what you did. Our pro tem sanitation procedures permitting, I believe, this much free speech so I will tell you that the real object of the Russian's billet doux was not SR Division, but closer to home."

"My God," I said. "What game is in SR Division?"

"Yes. GHOUL. It's a damn dirty game being played right now. You see, I've decided that there is an awful furry little creature loose in the Soviet Russia Division woodwork. They've countered by agreeing that there is a penetration, but the mole is in GHOUL. Dear boy, you were instinctively bright. Since you and I, for better or worse, are seen by now as umbilically attached, even Allen would have had to give some credence to SR's claim that the mole is in my cellar. I expect Masarov chose you precisely to put an elegant signature on the event. No question, you see--they're after me. The Russkys do appreciate my value more than the Agency. I appreciate your drinking pal more than the KGB does. He's a hell of a fellow. Stay away from him. Competitively speaking, he's nearly as competent as myself."

"Good lord," I said.

"You wouldn't care to trade wits with me yet, would you?"

"No, sir. Not yet."

"Ho. Good for you. Not yet. Well, by the same logic, stay away from your new friend."

"If I will be permitted to."

"You will." Pause. "Now, about the lie detector test. You won't have to take it."

"Will you use your illicit person in SR Division?"

"No need to underline his presence. I'll use another route."

"May I query you further?"

"Lord, no. You've got all you need. This call is costing a lot, and I can hardly put it on my expense account."

"Well, goodbye, then."

"Yes. Remember that I'm pleased with you." He hung up.

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February 22, 1958

Dearest Harry,

You have won the The War of the Rabbinate. There will be no flutter test. I know Hugh didn't tell you how he was going to bring it off, but do not feel cheated of the account. If my husband is Byzantine on matters so minor as a dinner party, perceive him as Bach's harpsichordist when it comes to plucking Company strings. In summary, however, this is about how it

went. Assuming that Mr. Hunt was not about to undergo any real professional discomfort for Mr. Hubbard, Hugh just by-passed Howard's rabbi, who is, incidentally, Lansdale. Hugh cut right over to J.C. King, the Right Gobsloptious Baron of your Western Hemisphere Division. J.C. King is not the sort of fellow to welcome Soviet Russia Division poachers on his preserves. I'm sure he's barely heard of you, but Hugh, never the one to miss buttressing a joint, also called on William King Harvey to put in his good word. J.C. King, like King Harvey, is an old FBI man and those Kings do stick together. That much to be said for J. Edgar Buddha's old umbrella. Well, you now have one more example of how my dear spouse can take care of everyone's career, but his wife's. You may expect I twit him about that. (The twit is a tiny bird whose wings are made of razor blades.)

Actually, Hugh and I have been getting along far better than ever and the reason is evident. Since my illness, he has been sharing a good deal more of his work with me. You don't know what a great step that is for him, considering how Hugh, for emotional purposes, was maimed in childhood when his mother killed his father. Since he cannot know whether the death was accidental or purposeful, his Alpha and Omega, built, of necessity, on rival propositions, are like two hill kingdoms facing each other across an abyss (which is one more likely if

somewhat gross explanation for his superb skills as a rock-climber--he is always seeking, you see, to negotiate that fearful and traumatic gap.) As a practical matter, he can trust no one. His Omega is a Borgia-like court with foul and bloody deeds soaking the foundation stones. You can conceive of how difficult it is for him to trust me with any details of his work. (Which, collaterally, is why it would be a disaster for him to know that we are corresponding.) You may ask how I can encourage our letters then, and I say that Hugh and I belong to a typical bond-and-bombs-away marriage, which is to say we are half-wed. His Alpha and mine are as joined as our sacraments, but his Omega cannot allow him to put faith in any woman, and my Omega, eager to be free and alone and full of taste for life, is obliged to suffer in the iron parameters of our marriage.

After my illness we did talk about such matters for the first time. I was able to point out that some of our sense of mutual oppression might be relieved by allowing me to live with a few of his adventures, if only in spirit.

"They are not adventures," he told me. "They are webs, and quite as sticky as spider webs."

I went along with his tidy formulation long enough to suggest that spiders did have the inestimable advantage of

being able to swing in the rigging. I do not think he realizes how much I am like my father--greedy for absolute knowledge on the one hand, and somewhat timid about the world on the other. My father solved his dilemma by packing all of Shakespeare into his commodious brain, and thereafter subsisting on massive snobbery. I do not wish to repeat Professor Gardiner's teeming, pullulating, and somewhat turd-like existence--forgive me, father!--but, do you know, Harry, my father has injured me in ways I am just beginning to assess. Truth, it was in unique fashion. Why, the first time I was visited by Augustus Farr was on that Easter night at the Keep so long ago when Daddy read to us from Titus Andronicus:

Whilst Lavinia 'tween her stumps doth hold

The basin that receives your guilty blood.

Do you remember? I was transfixed. For at the moment he said it, I clearly pictured my own wrists as stumps, yet it was not my hands I was seeing in the basin, but rather the head of my father and my beloved Hugh. You, for some reason, had appeared as nothing less than the basin itself. Can you follow? Before their bloody features became my images, I was looking into a silver bowl and saw your face. It made me think that you were the executioner of father and fiancé both, and this was the oddest way to picture you since I certainly

colors. So I came to learn what Hugh and I were really doing with one another while I was still a virgin. Later, on my wedding night that same summer at the Keep, when Hugh, formally and most bloodily, did at last deflower me, I had the connubial good fortune to come into union together with him, spasm for leap, leap for spasm, and he vaulted like a goat from height to height, and knew how to fall, the most extraordinary experience, yes, I know how to hurt you, dear Harry, but I do pay cash, and when confessing, will confess all, yes, there, in the last long illimitable leap, was Augustus Farr, ensconced, limb and breath, with Hugh and me. The monster had seized the night. My greed must have called him forth--my greed that went as deep as my father's buried mountains of lust and lore. I had never known that good and evil in oneself could speak to each other with such force and by such a dance.

For a long time, I felt that Augustus Farr did not try to come near again, not after that first night when he may have succeeded, I fear, in putting his signature upon our marriage. Of course, to live in propinquity with one's mate is to inhabit so many contradictory strata in oneself that it may be overdramatic to speak of a malign imprint upon an entire relationship. On the other hand, a clove of garlic in a wedding cake is nothing to ignore! Farr most certainly did

Not
entirely
clear

felt in touch with the darkest corners of the universe. I had rosy-hued (that is, fiery) visions of human degradation and sniffed at those fetid pits from which cries of pleasure reverberate. I was spellbound. Augustus Farr became my husband and my unborn child. Even as I felt Hugh's arm around me, so did I picture my embryo within, large-headed and wise as our Saturnalian rites, and felt that if I did not stop fucking at that instant-- there, I've just written the word for the first time!--felt that my child-to-be was going to be bartered away in some fiendish exchange. I remember thinking "It's just a thought." I was fearfully excited and wanted to go on, and Hugh, I remember, took us through the plunge with a loud and inhuman cry. Then, I began to weep for I knew that Augustus Farr had been there with us. I did not wish to believe it, and can hardly write this now--my hand trembles--but he had stolen--well, I won't write down my dear child's name. He walks at an odd pace these days, and sometimes I think there's a devil's hitch to his gait. He does have a very slight in-turn of the right foot, and Allen is his other godfather, did you know that? We celebrated the idea of two godfathers, one for Alpha, one for Omega. Christopher can choose between you when he grows up. As of this writing, you are the only godfather who is aware that there is another.

Well, I won't write any more about Farr on this occasion except to say that since my pregnant summer a year and a half ago, I have never lost completely my fear that the equations and transactions of the underworld are very much connected to us here. For example, I have days when I cannot invoke Allen's name without thinking of Noel Field, and that is a man I do not stop brooding about. Noel Field has been incarcerated in Soviet prisons for years. Allen put him there back in 1950. With the help of Hugh. I'm sure you have heard bits and pieces of all this, but you may as well know that Hugh used Noel as the ploy to play hell with a large number of Communist Party bureaucrats in Poland. Hugh could never bring himself to confide in me about this exploit, but I did pick up the details at TSS by way of the invaluable Arnie Rosen. You see, Allen, a vain man, was once made a fool of back in World War II by Noel Field, who took advantage of Allen's generosity to get him to recommend a lot of Noel's Communist friends for good jobs with the Allied armies. This was all done without informing Allen of their real political bent. (Noel, like many another Quaker, did go in for the most overweening permissiveness in dealing with Communists.) Well, such deeds left a lot of bad seeds in upper-story windowboxes. Allen had his nose rubbed in his own sloppiness. He never forgave Noel. But it took Hugh in

company with Frank Wisner to come up with the idea of how to pay Noel Field back. In 1949, we managed to get the word out to a few high Soviets that Noel Field was CIA. My own Harlot handled that part, and you may be certain left no American marks on it. I think Dulles, Wisner, and Montague assumed that Field would be imprisoned as a spy just so soon as he took one of his Christmas Red Cross Care package trips to Warsaw, and it was assumed that some of his Communist cronies might suffer along with him. It went a lot further than that. Stalin was hopelessly insane by then. Field did get incommunicado in a jail cell on his next visit to Warsaw, but before the affair was over, just about every Communist he had ever spoken to, plus their circle of cohorts, was either shot, tortured, in jail, or testifying against the others. All confessing to deeds they had not committed. Some put the number at a thousand dead; some at five thousand. When I inquired of Hugh about all this, he shrugged and said, "Stalin gave us another Katyn Forest massacre."

Well, I never knew whether to be proud of my husband's skills in this matter, or aghast, and, of course, the Agency now engages in levitations that can be seen as amusing or scandalous, depending on one's point of view. We have certainly financed a number of liberal but resolutely

anti-Communist organizations to set up a programmatic hue and cry about freeing the American martyr, Noel Field, from Soviet-Polish oppression. Pro or con, I do believe the spiritual effluvia of this large event has drifted back into Hugh's psychic marrow. I expect said effluvia inhabits his dreams. I may have been responding to such dark influence on those two occasions when Farr chose to cavort in our revels. I do not wish to calculate the cost. Later, Harry, during that awful time when I passed through the loneliness of living not only with my own career failure, but Hugh's hermetically sealed operations (sealed so far away from me) I began to think (and I don't know that I was wrong!) about all those Communists who were executed as traitors when they were not. Here was one more example of those evil masterpieces committed by us admittedly in the name, and, I believe, in the cause of good, but, oh, the anguish of those dying Communists just before they were executed. I began to wonder if we had not touched some unfortunate part of the cosmos. I hope that is not so, but I do fear for all of us. I think of the frightful way Herr Adolf did massacre all those millions of people in clean places. They walked into the chambers believing they were going to bathe their dirty, tired bodies. Hot warm showers, they were told, and received gas instead. As I was going under in my own

in GHOUL. By Hugh's estimate, the KGB set up the picnic in order to hand you a note that would point directly to Soviet Russia Division. This was done on the firm premise that Allen would then conclude the furry creature was located anywhere but in SR Div. Since you were the recipient of the note, but could not produce it, inasmuch as Boris had taken it back, a shadow would fall on GHOUL. The antipathy between GHOUL and SR Division is, after all, no secret. After which your inability to pass the lie detector test with flying colors--under the auspices of SR Division, that had to be a foregone conclusion!--would have become one more bad mark against Hugh. So a provocation set up by the KGB in Uruguay would have been manipulated to great effect by the mole in SR Div back at Headquarters. So, the purpose of the picnic was not merely to injure GHOUL, but to crimp Hugh's influence in the Agency. That would be a disaster. Hugh is not the man to make such a claim aloud, but I know he feels the KGB would be able to penetrate to the very top of the Agency if he were not there to stop them. And it wouldn't take all that many years.

Harry, I know you hate the idea of backing off from Masarov, so I'm going to offer the sum of my modest wisdom. I believe that people like you and me go into intelligence work in the first place because to a much greater degree than we realize, we've been intellectually seduced. And by nothing

In my special work, there was hardly an opportunity I
skilled man. I do not know if it is the routine of our work,
or the obligations of our profession, but I hear it rolling
on. Sometimes I can still not enjoy the situation that I am
conducting a baby in the fog. "Patience," grows the baby, "I am
in the hands of the sea."

I suppose I am thinking of my work with Chavi Reuter.
With the exception of a vacation in Buenos Aires that he took
with his wife at Cheltenham, I have seen him at least once a
week for the last fourteen months, and if I were to add up the
hours devoted to various projects, I am sure he would account
for nearly a third of my working time. The groups have
developed a great taste for the output, and they monitor my
reports carefully. He is far and away our most significant
agent in Uruguay, and a measure of the importance of his work
is how the war of the hemisphere was, in fact, declared over. A

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March 10, 1958

Dear Kittredge,

I know I have let two weeks go by since receiving your
extraordinary letter of February 22, but then you had so much
to say and I, in consequence, have had more than enough to
meditate upon. Besides, why not inoculate the philosopher with
her own advice: Patience!

In my school years, there was hardly an adjuration I disliked more. I do not know if it is the routine of our work, or the obligations of our profession, but I hear it tolling now. Sometimes I can all but enjoy the illusion that I am rounding a buoy in the fog. "Patience," groans the buoy, "I am in the bowels of the sea."

I suppose I am thinking of my work with Chevi Fuertes. With the exception of a vacation in Buenos Aires that he took with his wife at Christmas, I have seen him at least once a week for the last fourteen months, and if I were to add up the hours devoted to various projects, I am sure he would account for nearly a third of my working time. The Groogs have developed a great taste for Chevi's output, and they monitor my reports carefully. He is far and away our most significant agent in Uruguay, and a measure of that importance can be seen in how the War of the Rabbinate was, in fact, declared over. A cable came from the Right Gobsloptious Baron--where did you ever get that word? (Was it at the age of eleven playing jacks on Brattle Street, your pigtails flying? Gobsloptious--my God!) J.C. King sent decisive cablese to Hunt-- Commendation soon to be confirmed re AV/AVAILABLE's development of AV/OCADO. Keep up good work. That was the Baron's way of letting Hunt know that the lie detector test would now be deemed unfitting

for an operations officer as effective as myself. Hunt has been cordial as hell ever since. Do you know, human perversity being a bottomless pit, I like him more for liking me more!

In fact, I have to admit I'm a little taken with myself. King's praise may be tainted by other purposes, but the language did enable me to reflect back on these fourteen months, and yes, I do think I have brought in good, steady work on Chevi. He has certainly preoccupied my waking thoughts and who knows how much of my sleep.

You may then inquire why I have spoken so little of him, and the reason I've worked out for myself since, no question, I have stayed away from my number one agent as a topic for these letters, is that the work has consisted of small pieces of information received from his tasks at the PCU (Partido Comunista de Uruguay, in case you've forgotten). I did not wish to bore you on the one hand, and, on the other, did not care to diminish the importance of the project for myself by demonstrating in any one letter how modest the increments of intelligence would appear to an outside eye.

All the same, Chevi has made great strides. In these fourteen months, he has moved up the rungs of the PCU. His wife may be the leading woman in the Uruguayan Party by now, but Chevi has virtually equalled her effective rank. He is at

present among the three or four leading young men and may even be, overall, in the top twenty of Uruguayan Communists. He could one day become titular head of the whole shebang, and even now, as a practical matter, we have access to the thinking of the leadership.

Of course, the reason he has risen so quickly is that we have made it possible. I don't know if you recall, but almost a year ago, back in April, we decided to use Chevi to plant a little transmitter in the PCU's inner office. It was a five minute job consisting of no more than replacing one porcelain wall outlet with our carefully bugged duplicate--a work project calling for no more than a screwdriver. Still, it had to be done under combat conditions, that is, in the lair of the opponent, during the ten minutes, hopefully, that Chevi's associate was down the hall using the john for his nightly trot.

We did debate whether it was worth endangering AV/OCADO, but decided that the take, and the relative security of the caper, justified the possible loss. Chevi was cool, showing neither emotion nor enthusiasm, but simply insisted that his weekly stipend be raised from fifty dollars to sixty. (We settled for a bonus of fifty bucks and a five dollar a week raise.) Then he brought the chore off without incident, and we

have been using the take ever since, although said take arouses no great rounds of applause chez nous. Transmission in these kinds of circumstances is garbled. Chevi, however, does not know how inadequate our equipment has proved, so he assumes we know more than we do. I believe this motivates him to take extra efforts with his own veracity for he has to assume we now have a reliable check-out on what he tells us about the deliberations of upper-echelon PCU.

That, naturally, builds our reliance on what he does bring in. Moreover, the dispatch with which he carried off the porcelain wall-outlet job helped to convince us that he had turned a corner. This often happens with agents. Early hysteria is replaced by a most effective calm. Now, believing in him more and more, Hunt decided to push his career in the Partido Comunista de Uruguay. Marvelous, isn't it? Easier to get Eusabio Fuertes promoted than myself.

Kittredge, this exercise in applied intelligence isn't altogether pretty. We don't go in for wet jobs--at least, not down here, although I won't speak for Dracula's Lair, whew!--but our route did get dirty enough to stop in Pedro Peones office. At the peak of his reunion with Libertad La Lengua, Pedro was more than happy to entrap two PCU officials who were stationed higher than Chevi and very much in his path.

One arrest was by way of a false drug bust. An old tire filled with packages of heroin just happened to be found in the trunk of the PCU official's car (the heroin on loan from Peones' narcotics people). The other man was stopped for driving under the influence and being so rash as to attack the arresting officer. (The fellow was first splashed down with a bottle of liquor, then smashed repeatedly, I fear, in the face to show evidence of a battle with police.) While the PCU had to know that their people were being framed, they could do little about it but aid them in their legal defense. Since the first accused was held without bail for dealing in such a large quantity of drugs, and the second was beaten badly enough to be severely demoralized, even after being hospitalized for a month, replacements had to be found for their jobs.

Now, those victims (if it is any consolation to them) happened to be chosen with considerable care. You might even say the operation was designed. If I use such a word for a project like this, be certain I am still looking at the Doolittle report tacked to my wall. Never have the sentiments been able to speak out more loudly. "Longstanding concepts of fair play must be reconsidered. . . ." Yes, it is a war, and so our aesthetic bears the same relation to normal ethics that anti-matter shows to matter. By this rigorous, if

self-serving, logic, I am able to appreciate how much actual care and deception went into the operation. Do you know, Sherman Porringer surprised me once again. Essentially, the design is his, and while I would not wish you to start thinking of me as the Intelligent Ladies' Guide to Oswald Spengler, I must say that I am beginning to see profound relations between Oatsie's carefully painted empty egg shells and the delicacy he brought to this project. Hunt provided go-ahead: "See what you can do about getting Chevi promoted"--but Porringer put the clockwork into place. Using my reports of meetings with AV/OCADO, he collated Chevi's information on the PCU officials, until the true table of PCU organization could be worked out. After some months, we not only knew the personal characteristics of these Uruguayan Communists, but could specify who took orders from whom. Then Porringer fine-tuned further questions for Chevi. Elegant selection of target was what Sherman was hunting for. As he saw it, the key mistake would be to knock out the man directly above Chevi. PCU suspicions had to fall, after all, on any man in line to fill the gap. We had to allow that the PCU would be bright enough to assume Peones was doing our muscle work. Well, then, reasoned Porringer, look not only for a good man to knock out, but get one whose immediate inferior is less esteemed. The

assistant would not only come under suspicion, but could be busted in rank, thereby disposing of two obstacles for the price of one. This double disruption, even though located several rungs up the ladder, would benefit Fuertes.

On the first occasion, Peones' target was a PCU leader of unassailable integrity. His immediate assistant, however, had a gambling problem, and so was brought to trial by his Communist peers on suspicion of collaboration with Peones. Before it was over, the man resigned his office.

Six months later, the second arrest offered comparable results. Chevi had now advanced four rungs by our efforts.

Crucial to Porringer's design was that immaculate hygiene be maintained in relation to Peones. Pedro was never given a reason for either arrest. In each case, to confuse Peones and his people, we pretended to consider seriously other Communist officials as possible targets, including Fuertes. Our assumption was that Peones' police had already been penetrated by the PCU. The best way to obtain Chevi a clean bill from his own Communists, therefore, was to add his name to Peones' list of intended PCU victims. Indeed, this assumption of Porringer's was verified. The PCU probably did have an agent in Peones' department, because Chevi was one of those warned by the Party hierarchy that Peones was looking to trap him.

Before it was all over, Fuertes began to cross-examine me. During one uncomfortable hour in the safe-house, he began by speaking of the threat to his safety. "I would hate," he said, "to be beaten up by Peones' duros as a Communist when, in fact, I am a betrayer of Communists. The punishment would fit too closely to the crime. You see, I possess a sense of irony. Do you possess such a quality?"

"One tries to."

"Perhaps you will reveal it to me some day. But for now, it is loyalty I request. Can you help me with Peones? Can you tell him to stay off this body?" He tapped his chest.

"We only have limited influence with that man," I said.

"Verdad? It is not what I hear."

"We have tried to set up a relationship, but have had no success."

"Unbelievable. Who can pay Peones more than you?"

"For whatever reason, Peones pursues his own course."

"You are saying, then, that you will not protect me from police goons?"

"I think we can exercise some influence."

"You need only tell Señor Peones, 'Do not wait for El Coloso del Norte to roar.'"

"We are more law-abiding than you would ever believe," I tell him.

Kittredge, I offer such dialogue as an example of how far one can go on a cup full of lies when the octane level is high enough. There is no limit to where your wits will take you, morally speaking, and as you can tell by my telling of it, I cannot pretend not to like it a little. Yet, my sense of my own ultimate probity remains unassailed. Do all rogues, cheats, scoundrels and liars feel this way? Thank God for the flag.

Kittredge, I had to wonder at this outburst even as I was writing it. The events I relate are months old and took place during our long abstention from one another, but I think I have not yet made my full peace with Porringer's grand design. Chevi, suspicions of his rapid Party advancement, said, "It is one thing for me to betray my co-workers, but another to shoot them in the back."

Still, by the tune of his second gross advancement six months later, Chevi changed considerably. I think I could by then have told him of our complicity in his success and asked his advice on how to do it better. For one thing, he was now high enough on the slope to sniff the air of the summit, and

that was doing wonders for his ambition. For another, his identity had altered.

Kittredge, I wish you could have seen him before and after. In Fuertes, I have had before my eyes a shift in physical manifest from Omega to Alpha. The overtly sexual man seems to have disappeared. He has put on more than thirty pounds in this year, and has grown a prodigious handlebar mustache which in company with the plump pouches beneath his eyes has given him a not wholly trustworthy, but indeed jolly piratical South American look. Plus a sly glint. He makes you think of an overweight gaucho riding a poor skinny horse. With Roger Clarkson, he was always on the run for women, now he is a glutton for food. AV/OCADO is taking on the shape of his name. The largest disagreement we face these latter days is where to meet. He hates the safe-house, hates its cheap, sparse furnishings. The heavens help me if I forget to stock the icebox! He wants tapas and beer, steak and bourbon and--speak of peculiarities-- raw onions with good Scotch! Plus desserts. Dulces. Even the sound calls to mind a stream of half-frozen delights sweetening the parched canyon of the throat. He talks while eating. His pieces of intelligence come forth best as food passes in the opposite direction. He punctuates tidbits of information by sucking in small jets of air to clean the

spaces between his teeth. At times he acts as gross as Peones. And he keeps coming back to one theme: that we meet in restaurants. I have more and more difficulty refusing him. For one thing, the denizens of our high-rise apartment house muster an astonishing number of rich widows and well-to-do retired tarts, and they study everyone who comes up to their floor. Each time the elevator stops, doors will open and close all up and down the hall. One is peeked at voraciously from behind those vertical slits. These ladies must have expected a comfortable old age where they could pull back wooden shutters and set their accumulated bosoms on a worm-woody second story windowsill in order to study life in the common street below. Instead, they are now marooned on the twelfth floor and can only keep an eye on who goes in and out of each apartment. Needless to say, Fuertes is also aware of this, and claims it is dangerous. For one thing, the word is probably out among the neighbors that our apartment is a Casa del Coloso, and for another, he, personally, could be recognized. He has lived almost all of his life in Montevideo.

I take the problem up with Hunt and he is furious. "Tell the son of a bitch to shove his reports in a dead-drop. We'll pick them up with a cut-out."

"Howard," I protest gently, "this is not Moscow or East Berlin. We'll lose a lot if I can't elicit extra information by talking to him." I pause. "What about moving to a more secluded safe house?"

"All safe-houses present problems. His real bitch is the ambiente. You can't do business in South America in a flea-bag. That goddamn furniture! I can't get requisitions for decent stuff. Economies in the wrong place. I hate tacky government mentalities. A posh safe-house is a good investment if you can only convince the powers that be." He stopped. "Wigs," said Howard. "Tell him to put on a different disguise each time."

"Won't work," I said, "with his mustache."

"Just tell the cocksucker to shape up. Treat him like a servant. That's the only language agents really respect."

Exiting from this interview, it occurs to me, that I may now have put in more actual working hours in the field than Howard. In any event, I certainly know better than to follow his advice. As a practical matter, never treat an agent like Chevi any worse than a younger brother. And most of the time I fear I do cater to him. Part of that derives, I know, from my incomplete ability, as Hugh would put it, to toughen up. Damn it, I feel for my agent. Chevi does manage to penetrate

explosive. The toughest leftist street gangs in Montevideo come from the dock area, and their leaders are high cadre in the MRO (Movimiento Revolucionario de Uruguay), an ultra-left group with links to the universities and some of these workers' slums. Such boys are tough. In fact, they proved so rugged that our kids in AV/ALANCHE were getting chewed up by the street fights. It was no fun, I tell you, to sit in my car a half mile away, and hear nothing but a brief "Emboscada,"-- ambushed!--over my walkie-talkie, then, fifteen minutes later, see my team come straggling back with an unholy number of bloody heads--four out of seven one night. Then worse--one boy in the hospital, next another. Howard called on Peones to beef up our troops with off-duty cops handsomely paid from the Special Budget. Well, that made matters worse. AV/ALANCHE won a few fights, only to see the MRO come back with reinforcements of their own. We suspect one of our cops is on some left payroll or another, or may even (if he is an ideological) do his informing for free. In any event, these nocturnal encounters have grown into medieval battles. The MRO seem to know so well which areas of town we are going to be visiting on any given night, that the medieval image does apply. It is as if heralds have sounded the oncoming engagement: We will meet on the field of battle at the crossing of. . .

In the last year, a small operation of seven kids who did their wall-painting once a week, and fell into a skirmish perhaps one night a month, has grown into a weekly battle with thirty or forty people on either side using rocks, clubs, knives, shields, helmets, and one bow and arrow, yes, one was found on the street after an encounter we won, and finally, a boy was killed about a month ago on our side. Shot dead through the eye. Peones ran a dragnet through two working class neighborhoods, Capurro and La Teja, searching for the gun and the gunman, and informed Hunt that the killer was taken care of without a trial (which we are now free to believe or disbelieve) but, as you can see, the character of the event is significantly altered. Peones keeps two police cars waiting on the wings to charge in should any battle on any given night go poorly for AV/ALANCHE. AV/EMARIA, with their infra-red camera were actually used on one occasion to patrol up and down the surrounding streets photographing any and all youths approaching the scene, an absurdly over-weighted venture (speak of expense!) which Hunt did call to a halt once he saw that the results, apart from the labors of identification, were technically inadequate. (You couldn't discern the faces on the film, let alone identify them.) I could have told him as much.

At any rate, the MRO is now on the offensive. YANQUI A FUERA! is getting painted on many walls, and in good Catholic neighborhoods, too. The MRO people seem to have a better sense of where to strike than we do. (As a comic sidelight, some leftist politicians are trying to push through an ordinance forbidding the use of obscene language verbally or pictorially in public places. If passed, Peones assures us MARXISMO ES MIERDA will have to go.) In the interim, while the legislative echelons haggle and parley, I am receiving pressure from Hunt to push Chevi into furnishing us with more information on the MRO cadres and those leftists in the police department who are informing the MRO on where AV/ALANCHE, in company with Peones' cops, will try to paint next.

Fuertes refuses this request outright. We have our first major quarrel. It is beneath him, he proposes: He is a serious agent doing serious work and we are lowering his self-esteem by asking him to inform on street youths. "My pride is that I betray those who are situated above me, not beneath me."

"Ayudame', compadre," I exclaim.

"I am not your compadre. I am your agent. And insufficiently paid."

"Do you think you will obtain a raise by refusing to do what we ask?"

"That is a matter of no significance to me. You will continue to treat me like a puppet, and I, the puppet, will attempt to exert whatever autonomy is left to my limbs."

"Claro."

"Claro! Even for simple words, you accent is abominable."

"Why don't we cut through the crap and get to the bone," I tell him.

"Quintessentially American. Get to the bone."

"Will you fulfill our request?"

"I betray big people. Stupid stuffed-shirt bureaucratic Communists who have sold out their own people for the power they now exercise at a desk. They are upper filth, and I associate myself with them every day, and become an upper bureaucrat like them, but I do not delude myself. I have betrayed my people and my roots. I am a viper. Nonetheless, I am not so degraded that I wish to poison those who are smaller than myself. The MRO street boys who come out from La Teja to fight at night are nearer to me than you can ever be. I grew up in La Teja. I was cadre myself in the MRO during university days. I have no interest in searching for those policemen who are aiding the MRO. Besides, as should be clear to you, claro,

the MRO does not trust the PCU because the PCU is too established and too penetrated."

Well, at least I have a plausible report to bring back to Hunt. I am writing it in my mind as I listen: MRO and PCU are mutually exclusive. Profound internecine mistrust. Cannot determine left police sources without penetrating MRO.

That will use up a month of debate between Station and Groogs. By then, Hunt may be on to something else, or--and now I have an inspiration. The key to working with Chevi is to save mutual face.

"All right," I say, "you will not do it, and I will not threaten you. I accept your version; PCU and MRO lack umbilical connection." (Yes, Kittredge, on the job I now speak this way.)

"Put that in the bank," says Chevi. He bends toward me and whispers, "They hate each other." He giggles.

"All right," I say, "point made. Now, I want you to help me. My people are going to need a penetration into the highest places in the MRO." I point upward with my finger to emphasize that I am tune with the AV/OCADO ethic of punching up, always up. "I want you to provide me with a list of possible high personnel for penetration."

This is the kind of bargain that can be struck.

"I will need two weeks," he says.

"No, I want it for our meeting next week." I am thinking that I will get together with Gordy Morewood and go over the names Chevi brings in. Gordy will know how to make the approach. All this will take months, but my rapidly aging young backside will be covered. Oh, Kittredge, this was the moment when I knew I was a Company man.

"Next week," Chevi agrees.

I do not get through the hour, however, without paying one more tithe. He gives me a speech at the door. "Do you know," Chevi says, "I work for you because I have one life, and in the short term, you and yours are to my advantage. But in the long run of history, your side, which is now my side, will never win. Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"Because you and your people will never understand any of us."

"If you are with me, then who is your us?"

He scorns my division of the pronominal terrain.

"Dark people. Yes, señor, Muslims, Latins, Africans, Orientals. That is us. And you will never understand us until you comprehend that we try to earn our honor, and lift ourselves above shame. And I, sir, have sunk so low, that I

cannot feel honor at all. If, on occasion, I perform an act that is good, or brave, all I receive in my heart for such an act, is a temporary absence of the feeling of pervasive shame. My honor is lost forever."

With that, he stopped in the hall, raised his hand in greeting, I suppose, to the three or four widows and retired tarts peeking out at him, and, waddling just a trifle in obedience to his increasing avoirdupois, progressed down the hall to the elevators.

That son of a bitch. I can assure you, I didn't sleep too well. By the next week, however, Chevi had given me a short list of three names in the MRO, and Gordy Morewood was on the stick. Fuertes, in turn, by the following week, had asked for a raise. And would get it.

Yes, Masarov has been only one element in these busy days. Write to me. I need it.

Love,

Harry

-59-

March 15, 1958

Beloved Man,

I am so glad I gave you that short sermon on patience, since now you must wait to hear more about Dracula's Lair. I have taken so many vows concerning silence in this matter, that I have to argue my own way clear to finding the sanction to bring you in on it. Claro? Oscuro? Besides, it will take a long letter, and I have time only for a short one, yet am dying

to write to you. Yes, literally expiring. When is devotion ever so pure as in the luminous reaches of wholly private correspondence? Which we have, dear friend.

You took your courage so delicately in hand and asked me timidly about Alpha-Ego and Omega-Ego. How I must have frightened you in the past for stepping on my preserves, and how decent it is of you to still live with my theories when everyone else would like to decide they are naught but yesteryear's intellectual fashion.

Well, you do get brighter, and I complain too much. The best of the Agency, I sometimes think, is that people like Allen have, in fact, the largesse to treat some of us as well as favored graduate students at a very good university. We may fail to produce winning results in our projects, yet they continue to fund us. So, with all else, they are still letting me tinker with a few aspects of my theory. Small change now, but nonetheless, continuing. Indeed, while the main failure was enacting itself, a smaller test I had conceived does promise to work well enough to be employed most discreetly now among top echelon people. Test shows a way of discerning which young officers are likely to prove in future good bets for high echelon Company officials. It works because it is simple in premise. Find a gent with a patriotic Omega and an all but

Fields where the Ka could dwell forever. Thereby, it was not only possible but most important to avoid dying a second time in the underworld since that would leave the Ka dead forever. Well, figure-toi, our Ka needed a guide through the fiery pits and oily lakes and gorgons and dragons of this abominable endroit, and so the Khaibit became the guide. Do follow this! One's memory of the past became one's guide to the future. The good Doctor E.A. Wallis Budge then remarked that the Egyptians often perceived the Khaibit as sinister.

Of course! Memory, as a guide, is sinister. Nothing within ourselves betrays us quite so much as memory. Over the years, as I began to work on Alpha and Omega, I had, of course, to come to grips with the question of the ego, and my first useful perception was that ego insists on being the overseer of memory. No matter what we may remember truthfully down deep, the ego will distort the report if a shift in memory is necessary to maintaining the ego's self-view of things.

Well, contemplate the horrors of two egos, one for Alpha, one for Omega. No wonder people cannot bear my theories. It is equal to playing three-dimensional chess. Thank God, we're elitists. But, yes, the location of Alpha and Omega in any individual may best be found by examining the characteristics of their memory. It is therefore meaningless to speak of a

poor memory. What you can count on absolutely is that memory will be considerably less accurate in Alpha or in Omega. A and O always maintain separate styles of memory because their respective egos have separate needs. Given enough need, memory becomes a pure function of the ego. And the great need is usually there. How can a civilized person survive in the twentieth century without an effective ego? The easiest route, therefore, to finding the deeper properties of Alpha and Omega is by way of studying their separately evolved egos, which is to say, their respective uses of memory. Nothing standard here, either. There are cases among our Agency folk where one memory is excellent and the other is purposefully atrocious. In an executive, the excellent memory tends to dominate. In a psychopathic liar, the governing ego, by contrast, forbids memory any decisive powers. True recollection only gets in the way of the lie.

Well, you can see how complex this is. Every one of my perceptions opens thirty-two others. For now, suffice it that the best tests for uncovering the separate properties of Alpha and Omega are memory tests. And so, I am now in the place I love best, that alchemical shop of speculation where I can cook up new modes of approach. Think of the possibilities. You offer your subject some material to memorize. Then, you

question him on his retention, and discover not only patterns of recollection, but the most surprising loss of recollection. It is, potentially, a powerful tool. I've employed it already in simple form for my Cynical-Patriotic test where the diverse manifestations of memory are wonderful. Patriotic Omegas simply cannot recollect with any accuracy, material that is emotionally charged--they always convert such stuff to legend. (If you tell them in your presentation that George Washington was of medium stature, they remember him, thirty minutes later, as tall.) Whereas, cynical attributes reveal themselves by the ability to offer specific descriptions of complex arrangements of objects. You can cast twelve dice on a table, and cynics will recall astonishingly well the placement of each, and the number on the die. Give the same people such passionate, mystical, or spooky declarations as "In the beginning was the word, and the word was flesh," or "Praise to the Holiest in the height, and in the depth be praise," or "Take physic, pomp; Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel," and they can neither remember the quotation nor explain it.

I expect we have come a long way for a short letter, but then I needed to write to you. I am not, however, ready to tell you about my small place in Dracula's Lair. I think I

took too many vows. Speak of the Egyptians, I feel not unlike a mummy whose mouth is packed in clay. Forgive me, I will tell all. Promises on that. In the interim, I brood on what you say, or rather what your Chevi says about honor and shame. You might as well be one of the dark people for you are a complete study in that little dichotomy. Of course, I forget, you are one-eighth Jewish. Does that qualify you as one of the dark people? I do think it makes you more sexy.

Love

Kittredge

P.S. It occurs to me that even in this discussion of ego, I may have let you down. There is one extreme aspect of ego that I have not tried to discuss. Too unstable a proposition. One could term it ultra-ego. Contemplate the indescribably powerful psychic force that enabled monsters like Hitler and Stalin to live with the millions of deaths they left in their wake. At a more modest level, but not yet comprehensible, are those responsible for the death of thousands. It occurs to me that Hugh, by way of Noel Field, can aspire to this category. I know he has a governing ego more impermeable than the great

seal of silence that separates our present lives from any we might have had before if,--that is!--there is anything so intriguing as karma! Taken by intimate measure, Hugh's ultra-ego is curiously intoxicating to me, and feeds, I suspect, the impulse now driving this girl to become one of Dracula's ladies. God, don't I torment you! What a P.S. this has been!

I reread her letter several times, irritated by all it failed to explain. To distort one's memory as a means of supporting one's ego happened to be, thanks to my mother, no new concept for me.

What was to be said, however, of bare-faced lies which made no attempt to deceive oneself? I knew perfectly well that I was lying concertedly to Hugh Montague, Kittredge, Howard Hunt (to whom I fed only those facts he cared to hear), Chevi Fuertes (by reflex now), Sherman Porringer (in relation to his wife), and to Sally: That had been the worst lie. For I had made the mistake of hinting that love along some future tree-lined street was not wholly impossible; now I was paying the price. My lie exploded on the day she saw a headless ghost gallop across my face in the instant I learned she was

pregnant. After that, it did not matter what I tried to say; I was confirming what she knew already.

Our lost carnal relations began to live in my memory like a burned-out building. Sally made a point, when meeting at embassy parties, to be concertedly nasty. Such parties were about all I had for social life in Montevideo. On those occasional nights when I was alone in my hotel room, it would occur to me all too bitterly that I had neither American nor Uruguayan acquaintances who were not on these embassy circuits. I could not even boast of a bar I frequented regularly. We were not encouraged to--CIA men were always potential targets for kidnapping and torture, or, at least, so went the premise. On those rare occasions when night work or an embassy function did not have me occupied in the evening, I hardly knew what to do with myself--people who work sixty hours a week usually don't. And now there were no late-night options for chancy play with Sally. Before her pregnancy, there had been evenings when Sherman, kept late at the office on one or another protracted chore, would free Sally and me to meet in her car or mine, or, at the safe-house, or up in my hotel for a bout. Now, at parties, she gave me icy smiles, or would guide me to a corner and rake a few words over me--I used to feel like the earth heaped over with compost. "Harry," she would say,

"Sherman's become kind of a hellion in bed. He's groovy these days."

"They say marriages go through stages."

"What could you know about marriage?" Sally would reply, beaming a bright smile out to the rest of the room, as if she were telling me about a three no-trump doubled and redoubled, that she had won, believe it if you will, with three doubletons in dummy, and but a singleton in her hand to link up with partner's seven card suit, yes, just so bright was this smile as she added, "but marriage is obviously not for you. I still bet you're a faggot. Deep down!"

Deep down was where she had just wounded me. I thought of her protestations that no other man could ever make love so well. Now, I had a momentary struggle to keep the tears out of my eyes. Manifest injustice always affected me in such manner.

"You've never looked more attractive," I said, and stepped away.

I saw her soon after at the next Russian Embassy party. As evening came to the garden, we were left again with our natural colleagues, the Soviets. In a reprise of our earlier evening, Hunt and Porringer and Kearns and Gatsby and their wives, and Nancy Waterston and myself, were still there at the end with the Varkhovs, the Masarovs, and other Russian

personnel whose names, no matter how carefully I tried to retain them, continued to get away from me.

It was at this point that Hunt obtained his wish. Poking a long finger into Varkhov's chest, he said, "Georgey-boy, I hear you are going to charm our socks off and take us on a tour of your embassy."

"Soxoff?" said Georgi, "I do not think I know him." But I was able to pick up the smallest flick of a look he sent in Boris' direction, followed by a slow opening of Masarov's eyes to indicate assent, for Varkhov now said, "Yes, into the Embassy, of course, why not? Everybody," and we trooped in and took a tour of the rooms permitted, which were four in number and grand enough to suggest a museum. The gold and white furniture in these reception chambers seemed suitable for a lady-in-waiting to Louis XIV or Catherine the Great. That turned out to be not a bad guess for Varkhov now murmured to Hunt, "Furniture from excess at Hermitage in Leningrad."

"Yes, I hear that's one splendiferous pile," said Howard.

"Formidable presentation of Czarist era wealth," replied Varkhov.

We wandered about in these four medium-grand rooms with their high ceilings, extrusive gilt-painted moldings, solemnly profound old carpets, parquet floors, rococo chairs with faded

champagne seats, and all the many portraits of Lenin, Stalin--still prominent was Stalin!--Khrushchev, Bulganin, Peter the Great, and hunting scenes. I found myself looking into Lenin's eyes and they kept looking back at me until I recognized that I was drunk on vodka, and Lenin had devil's eyes.

More vodka now followed. Toast upon toast: To the summit! To summit meetings! To friendship between nations! To parity in space! To peace on earth! Hoorah, we yelled. After all, there had been so many years of supporting the weight of one another. Tonight, on a river of vodka, we had solved a myriad of problems that would be there again tomorrow, but for tonight, hurrah: We were in the Russian Embassy.

Hunt kept teasing Varkhov. "Georgey, these rooms are for the tourists. Give us the real trip. Let's see the dishes in the sink."

"Oh, cannot. No dishes in sink. Soviet sink clean."

"You just bet your Uncle Ezra on that," said Howard, and Dorothy explained, "It's a figure of speech," since Varkhov was already inquiring, "Uncle Ezra? Is cousin of Uncle Sam?"

Hunt finally got his way. We were taken on a tour through a few of the back offices, which had heavy Russian-made office furniture, but were otherwise not all that distinguishable from

ours. As we went along, Masarov had a moment when he was standing near me long enough to send a wink my way, a quick acknowledgement, I could only suppose, of the grief he had bestowed on me with his picnic note. As if we had been engaged in a practise sufficiently embarrassing on that Sunday afternoon never to make reference to it again, Boris had proffered no more invitations, and Zenia treated me like a stranger once more, which is to say she revealed again her abstract but nearly overwhelming sexual side, exactly what I had not been favored with in her home where she had been naught but maternal. In public, her sexuality was always saying: "You, a man, cannot begin to comprehend how magical, wondrous, and occult is the labyrinth of my power," but, it was, as I say, an abstract sexuality. You could have been approaching a large city at night from so great a distance that you had to be content with a view of the sky glow.

Now, Masarov, gave me the wink, and that was all, and we continued to straggle along, drunk, and with glasses in our hands, through office rooms whose paucity of equipment suggested only that such equipment must be in other rooms. We did, however, get separated far enough from one another that at a given moment, for perhaps thirty seconds, I was alone in one of their cubicles with Sally Porringer, who was by now just

pregnant enough to be looking prettier than ever, and Sally, with what had to be an accurate sense of the time it would take for the next person to reach our small quarters, proceeded to sit down, rock back in her chair, raise her knees and spread her thighs. She was wearing no panties, and my eyes, in consequence, were able to feast for five, eight, ten seconds on all the lost lands below. Then, with timing as precise as a dancing master, she put down her skirt and lowered her legs just as Sherman came along with Dorothy Hunt, but in that suspended interval, while showing herself to me, there had been time enough for Sally to whisper, "It's crazy being in these people's rooms," and I could have leaped across to her. The impulse to spring was so powerful that I was racked for days. I actually telephoned her. In fact, I made a fool of myself. She had touched some fatal spot between the navel and the groin. For the first time, I was tortured at not being able to have her, and Sally, in turn, kept assuring me through the receiver, "I won't bother to see you. Sherman is surprising merry hell out of me todos las noches."

"Sally, I just might be eating my heart out," I told her.

"Well, keep eating. Let your lips bleed," she said, and did laugh merrily. What a stomper in cowboy boots her rodeo dad must have been.

I had never had such need of sex before. I ended up one night going along with--who else could it be?-- Sherman Perringer to his favorite brothel. "Been remiss with the señoritas lately," he confided to me, "but that's because old Sally eats nothing but chili peppers these days," and he guffawed. There was to be no mistaking what peppy routines chili peppers could underwrite.

A supernatural couple of months ensued. Supernatural was the word. I plunged into an exploration of Montevideo's brothels, and felt myself fulfilling the image that Kittredge must have composed in her imagination before the fact. I enjoyed the brothels more than ever I thought I would, and usually came to like any whore I took for a night about as well as Sally. In the relief of knowing that it was sex I loved, Sally, poor girl--for I was now as mean in my memory of her, as she to me--yes, Sally, poor girl, commenced to be remembered as a randy mustang who would be honored best for introducing me to my true and natural estate which was to love women at large. Having feared them enormously, perhaps I did not now fear them enough; if my mother was the center about which I turned through this sweeping half-circle, the price was that I had to choose between love of the whole, and love of the half. Kittredge might have scorned some of my descriptions of Alpha

and Omega at sex and in love, but my old explanation, so rejected by her, seemed compatible enough with my new life. Alpha sported with prostitutes, and Omega, keeper of the dream, was in love with one exceptional lady. The lord of Alpha and Omega, which is to say, my own Harry Hubbard, was no sexual fascist, but the wise proprietor of a home for two strikingly different individuals, the romantic lover, Omega, who needed no more than a letter from his beloved to keep tranquillity, and Alpha, our sportsman, a son who could hunt like his father when it came to looking for female flesh.

Of course, such flesh was not hard to find in Montevideo. I knew the beginner's joy of unlimited game. There was a month or two when it was all as simple as that. Pornography had become an icon. Engraved on my retina and reprinted on my loins was the emblem of Sally's thighs parted on that Russian chair. It was as if I could draw unlimited libidinous funds from not one but two gargantuan international sources--the Superpowers! It would have been comic but for the copious augmentations Sally's bare American ass combined with a Russian chair gave to my banks of tumescence. Sexual greed kept returning like hunger.

If Porringer was my guide for the first night, and gave a running commentary on all the girls, "That short squatty dark

one is better than she looks, has a twat will like to jerk you off, it's got a grip," at which the short squatty one gave me a broad grin showing two gold teeth, and of another, "that girl has the prettiest pussy you will ever see but she only takes it up the ass,"--a lithe, slim, and sullen girl whose buttocks were her most salient feature--"although, goddamnit," said Porringer, "why not?" and then poked me with his elbow as a tall beauty with the falsest color of purple-red hair came down the stairs, "she's got nothing to offer but her mouth, can't touch her down below, she's diseased, but the mouth is worth the rest, and penicillin will keep you blessed," at which he began to guffaw and slugged his beer, oh, God, what an Alpha and Omega had to live together in Sherman Porringer--I kept thinking of the buried O who worked on painting those eggs. He was certainly at his worst in a brothel. His family had been part of Oklahoma for ninety years, the first of the Porringers out there among the Indians before the landgrab (as I was to learn on this night in the Arboleda de Mujeres, what a Female Grove!) and even had an insight into Sally and Oatsie and that near hundred years of their families' generation unto generation living on the long, mean plains of Oklahoma where the hound of austerity rode in with the dust (or so I conceived it, knowing nothing of Oklahoma but the little I knew) yet as I

saw it, human greed out in those lands, had been so deprived of satisfaction that it worked itself all the way back to the last human nerve--the one which leads to our soul. Greed, after all those generations of being compressed, had erupted into the hog, Porringer, and the sow, Sally, yes, I was not kind about the wounds I had taken, but they enabled me to see how Sherman saw himself as one good yeoman legionnaire of the American empire in the American Century, and therefore owning the female products of all the countries through which he travelled, good fingerlicking food for his omnivorous cock. Or was I, all regional differences ignored, also describing myself?

Even as I was buying my hour from one girl that night, and a second woman for a second hour, and feeling freer with these strangers than in all my twenty-five years of Park Avenue, Knickerbocker Grays, Matty Saints, punch bowl at Morey's and dinner at the Stable, boxing ring at the Farm, and the rock faces of Mt. Desert, Der Hintertür in Berlin, the beer with Boris and the dungeon groans of New England Hubbard rectitude in all my cells, even if my little end of the Hubbards had grown up in New York, still, the New England grip on the last nerve that leads to the soul had been released; the tap root where the greed was stored could pour out now into the American Century, and throbbing in the full untapped stuff of my

purpose, I fucked for America and for myself that night. The power and the majesty that glow when greed transmutes itself into a more noble emotion was there for me, I was free, I was an American, and I felt somehow as if I were finally in the scheme of things and advertising my land.

During this spell of night life, I went to mansions that must once have been as grand as the Russian Embassy, and to sheds on the edge of shack-towns where the streets were unpaved, and the loose tin roofs offered symphonic percussive effects when the wind blew. I visited parlors with bedrooms in high-rise apartment houses out near Pocitos Beach, and once, coming home from Hunt's villa in Carrasco, I found an elegant brothel in the shadow of the famous Carrasco Casino and Hotel, and indeed, it was a small stucco palace, even larger than Hunt's rented pile, and the girls looked as lovely to me as Hollywood starlets, but then I had been listening to Howard talk that night of Carrasco and why he enjoyed it so--"I like this place," he confided in his study over Churchills and Hennessey, "yes, I like Carrasco. On the street, I can close my eyes, wipe out all names and preconceptions of time and place, open them, and Harry, boy, I can believe that I am walking around in Beverly Hills, down there in the flat part, not the movie-mogul super castles up in the hills, but that

long stretch of high medium-income level down in the flat where they have all the red-tiled roofs and gardens just like here in Carrasco--do you know, I used to love that area when I was in Hollywood doing scripts, oh, the girls you got to enjoy. Girls everywhere. A man always has to see himself as a great lover, but I had a few credentials then. It's marriage gets the tail hanging low. However, you have to be alert to the compensations," and off he went on why I should find a wife, which advice I promptly put to other effect by deciding that I might as well be in Hollywood that night and so entertained the inner scenario that I was a young writer who was going to find himself a starlet in Carrasco, my Hollywood-by-the-sea. Near the Grand Casino, I did, or at least she might have been a starlet in California, a reasonably tall, pale, dark-haired young lady with a slim body and large round breasts whose pale nipples pointed most astonishingly toward the stars. She was a secretary, she told me, in the daytime, and worked at la casa only two nights a week. Anything more would have disturbed her novio, a jealous fellow who had enough difficulty accepting somewhat varying accounts of her two lost nights a week. She was almost beautiful, and distant, and made no particular pretense that she was approaching anything resembling earthquake force with me, but was nonetheless compliant enough

to suggest that she was mine, in chattle, at least, for the night, and my gusto laid offerings to her beauty if not to her austere Spanish sense of limited reciprocity.

Another night in a cellar whorehouse on a medium poor street, where the oak tables were bumpy with the welts of initials carved across the grain of other initials, I ended up with a short, fat and merry girl whose black eyes gleamed with expert mischief. She was delighted she had caught herself an American and proceeded to explore with her tongue every crevice I had counted as my own and a few I did not even know were there, until even Omega of the deep buried female spirit was stirred out of his Kittredge-loving quarters, and I felt as if I were coming all over town and knew afterward as I held that merry little fatso in my arms why it was that good-looking men like myself (no small vanity now!) could end up married to girls their physical inferior who did take the best care of them.

I loved the decor of just about all the brothels. They could be clean or dirty, lavish or bare, of high ceilings or low, they could present themselves as bars or sitting rooms, be illumined by candles or lamps, but the lights were invariably soft, and the juke-boxes, which were almost always an extravaganza of colored bulbs and cascades of neon tubing,

looked like little frontier towns unto themselves. You could gamble with your money, your heart, your ego, and your health. In the months that followed, I came down with gonorrhea twice and syphilis once, but Montevideo was not Berlin, and you could trust any doctor on any street to treat you without a report. In Berlin, every adventure had seemed to bear a likely cost, payment virtually in advance--here, in a part of the world where the tides lapped quietly on the shore, infection was an occasional concomitant of a good tour. I do not know where I found the zeal. I would work all day and party all night, even if the party began at midnight, and was not a party so much as drinks with strangers in a whorehouse bar. I would go out alone, or very occasionally with Porringer (who was growing surly about the increasing demands of Sally's enlarging belly) but most of the time, I was alone. The old fear--I now called it rich boy fear--that I as a CIA officer was open to kidnapping, ambush, torture, or entrapment, began to dissolve in the clear-cut economy of the brothels. I came to understand that to leave a tip twice as large as the girl expected made her twice as happy (and left you twice as protected,) I felt as if I were back in the simpler time of Adam Smith when commodities were joyous artifacts for contented use by

satisfied humans, and the best commodities received the best prices, and smiled within for being appropriately recognized.

Needless to say, all this exploration night after night was only possible, I knew, because a part of me was now more in love with Kittredge than ever, yet since I deceived her no longer with one hard-as-clay tough little American cheerleader, but rather surrounded her with a full chorus of her own sex--even if they were, for the most part, poor and South American--I felt no shame. How could I? I was satisfying a prodigious curiosity I had not known I possessed. I was proceeding on the assumption that women who looked alike would make love in similar fashion--and it may be as good an hypothesis as any other. Often, I selected girls who reminded me of women I had known in the past from afar, and there was perhaps never a time in my life when curiosity was as satisfied. I could even tell myself that this quickly acquired education in loss of innocence was going to be excellent for my future work in the Agency. Knowledge of people was part of the power to do one's job. In fact, I was laying the foundation of sexual habits for a good many years to come. If there was not always an accomodating ring of brothels in every place I would yet be employed, still, I managed to keep sex far enough apart from any yearning for intimate love never to challenge my

feelings for Kittredge. What a nest was built over the years. I was full of faith that my romantic life would yet live with purpose.

It all sounds a touch removed even as I describe it, and so it was. If I went through an early period of entering brothels alone with my courage racing as fast as my heart, and my fists balled in my pockets, expecting danger in every corner of these places, such fear was soon replaced by the accrued confidence that vice and violence were usually antipathetic--nowhere in the world was a bad drunk more unpopular than in a Montevidean brothel. It was only in the cheapest holes that one had to be ready for anything more than the choice of your pleasure. Besides, any American daring to visit a low joint had to be seen as well-connected to narcotics or the police; if I had learned the low trick of tipping the bouncer, that merely certified I was knowledgeable and American. There was always the risk of being cheated of my money, but then I never got so drunk I could not count, and the true peril, as I discovered over the months and years, was that the effusion of one's loins when abetted by the heart-warmth of booze could prove a wholly corrosive bath which leached you out to your bones coming down. Then, loneliness would visit. After a while it began to arrive in the middle of a drunken

spree. There was one such night in a cheap whorehouse called El Cielo de Husár near the docks in La Teja (where I had gone to satisfy my curiosity about the neighborhood Chevi claimed for his childhood haunt.) It was too dark to see much of La Teja, but the pot-holes on the street were a clue to the condition of the houses, and The Hussar's Heaven that I had chosen, named, no doubt, after the troops of some renowned if local war in 1830, or 1840, was a dilapidated and very old house of the early nineteenth century which must once have stabled horses in the living room. Now there were gaps in the molding and rat portals in the walls, the swaybacked beds had dirty blankets at the foot, and the whores were stupefied, unattractive, morose, or at least such was the level to which they returned between flights of animation when a customer entered. If I was there on that night, it was because my mood was no better. I was beginning to realize how much my trips through the brothels were an attempt to feel merely like a man, rather than a CIA man. Feeling lonelier than I had felt in a long time, I made love to my girl in a surprisingly perfunctory performance considering how I took the act all the more seriously because of paying for it (penurious were the deeper Hubbard habits concerning the hard, the crisp, and a little of the God-given given) yes, I did not like to throw my money

around. I sought to choose women who brought a modicum of art and ceremony to this possible desecration of eternal sacraments--you could take the boy out of the chapel, I said to myself, but you could not take St. Matthew's out of the boy, I was as alone as all that, drink notwithstanding. On the same afternoon, I had actually been curdled enough in my judgement to wonder if Sally Porringer and I could, all hazards recognized, be able to live as man, woman, and new child, no, that was smashed on the thought of my child's head dented by the last phallic acts of the previous husband, Porringer, just so morbid had my thoughts become, and were still with me that night in the Hussar's Heaven, while banging away on a piece of flesh. I know the nearest one could come to knowing the true grip of depravity was when flesh felt equal to rubber in your hands, and I was trying to force the semi-demoralized and soon wholly expendable troops of my loins up one more drunken hill and out into the night. Then, from the bedroom on either side of me came the long professional wail of two whores as they came in unison with their clients, or pretended to. Their voices cried out into the chilly South American night of the much-depressed neighborhood of La Teja, and the whore on my left screamed, "Ijo, ijo, ijo," while the one in the room on my right was grunting, "Ya, ya, ya." It was then I knew the wages

of loneliness. That is to assume you are the loneliest man in the world, and feeling like a prematurely old horse, I scrambled up over the bare knoll of pleasure reserved for me on this night, and paid my immediate dues a little later in pesos, and dressed, and went downstairs for a drink at the bar which I did not finish--I was obviously coming to the end of my youth when drinks I had paid for I would not finish--and then left El Cielo de Husár (which was one brothel I would not visit again) and went on a long walk to the garage where I had taken the precaution to leave my car since the appropriation of cheap automobiles on the street at night was something of a problem in Montevideo where used vehicles, after all, were loved so much by the poor.

On the way, I met Chevi Fuertes. It was not a coincidence, but a miracle. So I felt. My depression had become thus profound that the sight of his wide and smiling mustache was a providential omen. I was no longer at the end of the first long street of my life, but merely in the middle of a bad evening which had just taken a turn. We went off to the next bar to have a drink together and when that, after fifteen minutes, ceased to work (since the dregs of my professionalism were still powerful enough to sober me profoundly at the thought of being seen together in public), we

decided to get into my car and take a drive out to Pocitos Beach to visit a dear friend of his, Miss Libertad La Lengua, who would not be working tonight, Sunday night, he said. I should have paid more attention to the way he said Miss Libertad La Lengua, but then it may not matter.

Let me offer a bit of context. I was due to see Chavi
Thursday last Sunday evening. A miserable rainy night and dark
eyes, and feeling so lonely for you I wish I could smell some
of those horses who died in your stable one hundred years ago.
How far away Georgetown seemed. One feels at the bottom of the
world in Uruguay. Such were my cheerful thoughts when Chavi
phoned and the unforgettable urgency to call my hotel room.
Of course, he put a blackboard over his eyes and mouth
as I will admit I didn't recognize his voice. He's a scoundrel
he chose to talk in a slip as if we were planning a homosexual
assignment between us. Good, what is Chavi had over and a
passing up on his? Or worse, the FBI. Think of all those gay
agents who would be thrown in jail to death. Society
surrounding the pool of the Andes.

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April 6, 1958

Dearest Kittredge,

For once, I do not feel in a rush to apologize even if it
is weeks since I sent a letter. But then, you have kept me
outside Dragon's Lair. I do have, however, something I want to
tell and so will not try to torture your curiosity. You see, I
have met Libertad La Lengua. The legendary Libertad.

Let me offer a bit of context. I was due to see Chevi Fuertes last Sunday evening, a miserable rainy night one week ago, and feeling so lonely for you I swear I could smell some of those horses who died in your Stable one hundred years ago. How far away Georgetown seemed. One feels at the bottom of the world in Uruguay. Such were my cheerful thoughts when Chevi Fuertes had the unforgiveable audacity to call my hotel room. Of course, he put a handkerchief over his pay phone mouthpiece so I will admit I didn't recognize his voice. He's a scamp. He chose to talk in a lisp as if we were planning a homosexual assignation between us. (God, what if Station had ever run a passing tap on me? Or worse, the KGB! Think of all those gay agents who would be thrown at me in months to come. Soviet entrapment! The jewel of the Andes!)

Well, it was just a joke. Chevi merely wanted to ride out to the safehouse in Pocitos Beach with me. Too long a trip by bus. Could I accommodate him? Kittredge, if I ever train case officers, I'll tell them to learn their game fishing first. You pull in until the moment when you must give slack. This was such a moment. I picked him up at a bar, and out we drove to the safehouse.

It purported to be a routine meeting. Of late, if you recollect, he has in his own grudging way been filling us in on

the MRO which is ultra-left and potentially dangerous. They believe in guerrilla activity (although there are few hills in these Uruguayan pampas). They have, however, a nascent group in MRO called Tupamaros who are probably ready, if it comes to it, to terrorize right wing Uruguayan politicians and businessmen. Getting names out of Chevi about these fellows has been the most tedious job I've had on AV/OCADO. Like pulling teeth with your fingers. He kept declaring his loyalty to all the lower level people in MRO. Then he would give one name.

On our side, it's been hard to hold Hunt back. We may have been subtle for a time in the way we used Peones vis-a-vis the PCU, but once the MRO began to beat up on AV/ALANCHE, Hunt, who is nothing if not a team player, decided to employ fewer sanitary procedures. Howard has now given the order to Peones to smash some choice MRO heads. In turn, Chevi complains that we are using him for nothing better than a finger man on hit contracts. Each name provided of an MRO leader (four in all) was a name now in a hospital. "I am incommensurably stupid," Chevi told me. "There is no possibility that Peones and his goon squads are not working for you."

"I cannot comment."

"Claro."

"Peones has his own sources of information," I said, but Chevi began to laugh.

"I could tell you about Peones," he said. "I know him better than you. I grew up with him."

"Yes?"

"In Montevideo, everybody grows up with everybody. Peones is an outrageous bully. And a dangerous man."

"Yes?"

"At the highest level, he is a fool."

"Why do you say that?"

"I am going to tell you because I choose to. If I did not so choose, torture would not make me reveal what I know."

"I agree."

"Por fortuna!" But he was pleased that I took him seriously. "Pedro Peones," he went on, "is insanely in love with a prostitute who is a friend of mine. He loves her so much that if it came to it, he would betray all of you."

"Could it ever come to that?"

"Who is to say? On the face of it, not likely. The woman, Miss Libertad La Lengua, is a primitive capitalist. The accumulation of capital is all that concerns her. Why should she want Peones to betray any of you?"

"Businessmen can always fall out."

"Muy jocososo."

"Jocososo?"

"Very jocular," said Chevi. "She would urge him to betray your people only if it were worth her while. If the Russians, for instance, were to make her an offer she could not refuse, she could induce Peones to work with them."

"She must be impressive."

"Incalculably so. When you meet her, you will appreciate what I mean. Her powers may be unique."

"Yes, but how and when am I to meet her?"

"Tonight. At her house." He sat himself down beside the safehouse phone and said, "Peones always visits her on Sunday night. Early. He goes to Mass in the morning, spends the afternoon with his family, and by evening, cannot wait to be with her for a little while. She receives him at home. Then he leaves. She waits for my call. Shall I use this phone?"

"Do we need to?"

"No. She is expecting me."

"And who will you say that I am?"

"An American friend who works for the State Department."

"You will tell her that you, a Communist, associate with Americans in the State Department?"

"She has no interest in politics."

"Chevi, it is impossible for me to go."

He began to laugh. "I have not told her anything. I will merely say you are an American with lots of money and could soon be parted from it."

"And if I wanted to buy her services?"

"They are not services. They are offerings."

"Are you in love with her?"

"Yes."

"But you would not mind if I purchased her services?"

"She is a prostitute," said Chevi.

"You do not speak of her as if she is really a whore."

"She is a courtesan. Al fundo, a vestal virgin. What do you wish? It is reality. I accept it."

"Well, I can't afford her."

"I would think not."

Kittredge, we actually speak to each other in this fashion. By the book, one is not supposed to be this friendly, but it is where we have evolved. Actually, he knows and I know that while I may go to a brothel once in a while--do not sneer at this simple need--I would never dare to get into the kind of precipitous financial transaction a woman of this sort could induce. Moreover, it's potentially compromising. We have something of a file on her, courtesy of Western Hemisphere

Division, enough to know that in Havana she had links to both sides, Batista, and the Castro underground. Yet this piebald set of allegiances is what decides me to accompany my agent on a visit. Hunt tends to be positive. He likes to go with a promising action, and in his limited way, if you don't fall off your horse, he will support you. So I can probably tell Howard I went along with Chevi in order to check her out. If she has any leftist sympathies that are still active, we should know more about that, for God knows what twists or kinks she could put into Peones' mind if she is half as powerful as advertised.

Well, you know, it's madness. The only reason I am going, I tell myself, is to satisfy curiosity. But then it's deadening to obey sanitation procedures twenty-four hours a day. Makes you feel as if you're on a space ship. Once in a while, you have to enjoy the equivalent of an end-of-year Bavarian blow-out. In my case, I have to take a chance on my curiosity which metamorphoses every once in a while into a ravenous beast.

So we went over. She lived in another high-rise building a little beyond the apartment house where Boris and Zenia dwell. I am privately overcome at the nature of the peculiar impulse that drives so many people who might afford something better to choose these blank high-rise habitations that look

out over a placid, spiritless clay-colored sea filled with the sediment of a river. There are more interesting architectural endroits in Montevideo, but do not quarrel with the high-rise impulse. It gets you up to the tenth floor, at least. Hers is the sixteenth floor, and a pent-house, no less.

On the way over, Chevi is in a most unusual mood, full of giggles, sudden impulses, nasty vapors. He has, for instance, insisted on our crossing of the Rambla against all the high-speed traffic, a dubious endeavor by daylight and downright dangerous at night, yet, he still feels righteous enough after all those self-induced perils to turn around and shriek at a driver who has certainly passed too close: "Con mis sentimientos lo mas distinguidas!" sticking his middle finger into the heavens to accompany this wail of malediction. I wonder if he thinks it is effective curse-work? Then, he giggles again, insists we take off our foot gear, and we scuffle along in the sand, cuffs rolled up, toting our shoes, path lit by the moon and the well-domiciled surf which rolls in on thin luminescent ripples of foam. The sand is damp and clay-like against my feet, and I wonder why he is going to such lengths until I realize his detour partakes of ceremony. He is going to describe sexual relations between Libertad La Lengua

and Pedro Peones, and for that, no ordinary setting is required.

"She said once," Chevi now tells me, "'Another woman cannot know men so well as myself. I approach each visitor as an enigma in logic, a labyrinth. The man has a lock to which only I can locate the key.'"

"Chevi," I protest, "she does not talk that way."

"Well, in fact, she does. One reason is that I have taught her much. I have introduced her to the work of Borges. Do you read Borges?"

"No."

"You must never read him. In five pages, in any of his five pages, he will summarize for you the meaninglessness of the next ten years of your life. Your life, particularly."

I was sufficiently put out to reply, "Enjoy the absurdity of your life, and I will manage with mine." He roared with laughter. He had tweaked the short hairs of the Colossus of the North. The more I ponder our relations, more incomprehensible they become. I can like Chevi so much, or dislike him with a pure sibling wrath, but to describe him in reports, is to leave him on a dissecting table. Omega for confrontations, Alpha for evaluations. Kittredge, thank God for your system. It's the only way to see myself as sane,

balanced, reasonably decent, and doing a tricky job under quirky circumstances.

Well, don't I digress? I still did not believe Libertad spoke of locks and labyrinths. "Borges or no," I said, "one human being cannot calculate another so closely."

"She can," said Chevi.

"Well, how does she make love to you?"

"That is sacrosanct."

"So you choose not to prove your case."

"I will tell you how she makes love to Pedro Peones."

"Yes, how?"

He roared again. He kicked gobs of damp wet clay with his bare feet. He then proceeded to tell me, and in detail!

Kittredge, it's shocking stuff, and I'd rather not offer it in his words which made a point of testing my knowledge not only of Montevidean slum talk, but expressions he'd picked up in Harlem as well, argot like pervy and soft pete, brand and porthole, ass-teriors, bummy, and the latter, believe it or not. The Spanish was at least more functional. Vagon de cola, which I think is caboose, seña de pantalones, an awful image which pretty directly suggests the breasts of the trousers, and the absolute pit, tuba de salida de gases, which I'm sure you can translate, but, if not, exhaust pipe will do. Chevi