

delivered his description with an ongoing oscillation of giggles and sniggers that shattered my normal sense of his dignity. I expect it was his Catholic background regurgitating on him, plus all that Latin sense of scorn: Such matters are considered so abysmal that they should only be discussed by children, that is, with sneaky guilt and glee, hence the sniggers and giggles. God, are these Uruguayans fixed on flesh, and, of course, all flesh leads to the capitol of flesh, the buttocks. I know now where Latins think the Devil hides himself, yes.

Apparently, Pedro lays himself down on Libertad's bed, his cheeks exposed. She, dressed in what Chevi describes as "elegant leather," proceeds to spank him. Pedro Peones, big as a walrus, laying out there on the bed, belly down over two thick pillows so that his backside is up, as Chevi describes it, "como dos melones gargantescos," and she whips him lightly, stopping only when the pain produces a touch of froth at the corner of his lips. Then, she proceeds to bite him, a precise little business which leaves the exposed area scalloped by neatly placed scimitars of teeth markings, after which, just as Pedro is singing away in some melange of sobs and assaugement of guilt, she croons, "Oh, Pedro, my peon, my pene pequeño (little penis, no less), mi perdiz, (my partridge), mi

perfidia, (my perfidy) mi pergamino (my piece of parchment) mi perla (pearl) mi permanganato (yes, pomegranate!) mi perniciosa pedazo de pechuga (my nasty little bit of tit) mi pelon culo (my bald backside) mi pepino Persa (my Persian cucumber) mi perseguidor (my pursuer) mi persico (my peach) mi pezuña (my cloven-footed beast) mi petalo (petal) mi peonia (peony) mi pedunculo (my flower stem) mi peste (my plague) mi petardo (my fraud) mi picarote (my impostor) and with that, having flicked him with a whip, nipped him neatly, and herbified his ears with her alliterations, she bends over, murmurs "Vaya con Dios, ya, ya, ya," and delivers, yes, Kittredge, one lingering kiss sub cauda (which I will not translate on the assumption that your Latin encompasses mine) at which point, Peones, according to my narrator, gives back in turn, one great oath, "Madre del diablo," and wets the pillows with his "emisiones lo mas elegantes," --Fuertes' final flourish upon the proceedings.

It has been, I fear, all too absorbing a description, and when he is done, I refuse to believe it. Yes, he tells me, these were Libertad's precise words to Pedro Peones as related by her, on one's oath as a man, a lover, and a perfidious agent--he does speak in this manner when carried away by a tale, and then adds, "This is your true portrait of the police

bully, the master-goon Peones, this is his pleasure. This is the tender if hidden face of our sadist."

"And you are still in love with Libertad after such practices as these?"

"She informs me of her acts. That is her avowal of love. You cannot comprehend because in your country, your religious devotions, such as they are, have been voided of the profound human transaction of confession."

Do you know, sometimes I believe Chevi became an American agent so that he would not lose an opportunity to keep us up on his low opinion of American merits.

Well, I will withhold my description of Libertad no longer. We ascend in the elevator, a plastic cage, come to her door and there she is, the first face I have ever seen whose sexual life seems as immediately intimate to me as my own. No, it is more intimate--I am not in the habit of observing myself in the act. Then, on the next moment, I know only that I am in the presence of a creature. She is extraordinary. If the gleam of a candle's flame is pale blonde, then she is more blonde than fire. I see a halo of platinum hair on a heart-shaped dimpled face, her eyes deep and mysterious blue look at me out of fields of dark eye-shadow, and her mouth--ah, that crimson mouth is just a little too plump and too strong--I

am staring at an angel with a heart like a honeycomb, full of sugar and greed. Such is my first impression. My second is that she walks like no woman I have ever seen. "Hello," she says in English in a deep and husky voice that must travel its own distance to reach her mouth, "please come in," and with that she turns from the door and leads us through her living room out to the penthouse patio where we stand by the balustrade and look down sixteen stories to the sea. She has done this quickly as if she did not wish me to view her face for long in the light. Perhaps she is older than I expected, perhaps ten years older than Marilyn Monroe if at least twenty years younger than Mae West, but what a way of walking!--it need give precedence to neither lady. Her calves are exquisite, her thighs leonine. Time takes its own breath when she deigns to move. I speak of Monroe and Mae West--she is of their party, that sexual party as sure in its essence as cash is green. Cash says, "I am money, first, last, and always." Money in one's hand or on the table is a presence more tangible than the people who are staring at it. So is she an avatar of sex. One cannot suppose that any idea void of sensuality would ever inhabit her person. I am absolutely agitated by her. I feel as if I am in the presence of a goddess. I do not wish to know her better, one cannot; she is a goddess. Now, I

comprehend for the first time what it must be like to meet a movie star.

Except, I must tell the truth. It is not agreeable but exorbitant. She dictates her terms: Truth must be told--I found her unbelievably attractive. Hubbard blood is hardly spontaneous, but her aura passed over into me as if the act had already commenced. I had all the emotion of a man who has entered a woman even as I remained outside. Kittredge, I dare this confession because you will see there is a turn to come. Or two. In these first instants, however, I was, for the first time--since meeting you at the Keep--wholly overcome.

Mind you, all she said was "please come in." Now, on the balcony, she reaches into a silver purse that matches her silver lame gown. (This cannot be the same outfit she wears with her whips--no, she must have changed for us.) Now, she can hardly withdraw her cigarette from her purse before Chevi is on her with his lighter. He gives fire and she draws it in. The passage is as continuous as a devotion--I think of an Episcopalian chaplain who would make the sign of the cross with so great a concentration upon the agony of the Lord (at least such was the chaplain's expression) that you could feel the self-same agony in your chest when his outstretched arm drew the horizontal; now, I am overcome at the solemnity of a

cigarette lighter brought to a tip of tobacco; I have never been in the company of a woman who is so profoundly feminine. I feel as if I can now have an image of the high priestesses of antiquity, yes, they radiate the force that turns through the circumference of a circle, or quivers in the points of a triangle. Now I see that Chevi's descriptions of her little ceremony with Peones must have been grossly distorted by the comic violence of narration. Those were the Devil's own sacraments Peones was receiving. I am curiously disturbed, as if on the edge of betraying myself forever, I know not how. I study her smallest move. It is as if the arts of all the attractive women she has ever encountered have been absorbed in her person. She is wholly an Omega. I can feel no sense of the other person. Where are the nicks and welts of a rough-hewn daily world? For that matter, I cannot take my eyes off her breasts which reveal themselves, by the light that reaches to the patio from the living room, as not only large and wonderfully well-shaped, but mysterious in their cleavage. That seems as deep as her voice.

Apparently, she knows more about me than I care to have bruited about. There is no question that she is aware of my occupation; soon enough it is apparent that she has just about ordered Chevi to bring me. She discloses her desire to meet E.

Howard Hunt. I confess that the thought of introducing one to the other is not without its appeal for me.

All this comes forth in the oddest conversational vein. We look into each other's eyes where, persist as I will, I succumb to the depth of her superior knowledge and have to look away. As soon flail at the sea. "Do you like your work?" she asks me. There is a softening of the hard "i" in like. She has a trace of Southern accent. "Your English is good," I reply.

"Learned from an American," she says.

"A wealthy Texan was her protector," adds Chevi, "in Havana."

"Not my protector long enough," she puts in.

"A friend of the American Ambassador to Cuba," says Chevi. He nods and looks at me. "An official friend."

"One of yours," says Libertad to me.

"I cannot conceive of any of my countrymen failing to be your protector," I say, but the remark goes dead. I do not know if she is bored by such flattery, or simply does not comprehend me. Her English may consist of no more than eighty-nine phrases.

"One of yours," repeats Libertad.

"I think she is saying that she would like to meet another," adds Chevi.

"Mr. E. Howard Hunt," she says.

"He is, at the present moment, very much married," I tell her.

She shrugs her shoulder. It is a low gesture accompanied by a turn of the lip. I take a step forward in comprehending her: I decide she is using Evita Peron as the model for herself. Can this be true? It would explain much about Libertad. Of course, a Uruguayan acolyte of Evita Peron would wish to meet Hunt. He is the gateway to the Uruguayan pampas. Hunt knows every wealthy ranch owner, and every such haciendado is a potential pot of gold. Or, is this too simple?

We have come back to the living room--which is disappointing. It has expensive furniture of a cheap, over-priced sort, a melange of eighth and tenth-generation copies of Queen Anne, Louis Quatorze, Duncan Phyfe and Spanish Colonial, the lot cheapened down and gussied up every step of the way. Gold-plated metal leaf has been added to all the wood moldings. The general effect is of over-rich dark stained woods with gold embossings. Whore cushions of satin are everywhere, and our feet stand on a wildly expensive brightly-hued rug whose only virtuosity can be found in the

I ask why. "Nardone makes many noises now," I say knowingly, "but has no chance to win. The Colorados own the election. They have won for a hundred years."

"This year," says Chevi, "the Blanco-Ruralista coalition will prevail."

"I cannot believe that," I answer.

"Nardone will win," says Libertad. "Benito will win."

We are sipping a sweet cognac. I am feeling quietly claustrophobic but only slightly afraid of Libertad La Lengua. If at first, wholly terrified by her, I have still been as irresistably drawn in her direction as might some hypothetical explorer of the sense of smell who voyage up the scent of a perfume to its source; now, all the same, her singularity of purpose is insulting to me. I have to recognize that she sees me as nothing more than one step of a connected series. Of course, her eyes have the power to engulf me at will, her femininity contains me in its cloud, but I wonder if I am not dealing with a force as ubiquitous as the wind, personal in touch, intimate in shift of voice, there for everyone.

We are, however, at an impasse. I am wondering why she wants Howard Hunt to present her to Nardone. Why not do it through Peones? I suspect the reason is that Nardone will trust her more if the meeting takes place under the sanction of

the Chief of Station of the Colossus of the North. Since I am not about, however, to make such an introduction under any circumstances, I can see that the meeting has come to a close. I stand up to take my departure, and to my surprise, Chevi leaves with me. They embrace like old friends, and he pats her most respectfully and tenderly on the behind, then kisses her hand with a sweep of his mustaches. She, in turn, leaves a kiss on the corner of my mouth, at which my cheek becomes as alive as if it had been touched by a bird's feather. Then I recollect where her mouth has been this evening; my face burns like balefire.

In the elevator going down, I am already furious at Chevi. I contain myself and do not speak until we reach the street, but then I become the one who insists on crossing the Rambla. Kittredge, you could call it a form of Russian roulette! Even after we have raced across and are safe on the sand, I am still laboring to control my temper.

"How could you have put me in so wretched and compromising a position?" I say at last. "You are not my friend."

"I," he says, "am devoted to your interests. I merely wanted you to have an insight into one of the rare artifacts my country has produced. Uruguay exports hides and woolens and

beef, but only one work emblematic of Uruguayan genius--a great whore."

"Shut up," I say. "You are wholly untrustworthy."

This anger, to my surprise, leaves him meek. I am wondering if I should have shown such a side of myself months ago. The trouble is that my temper is not a tool in dependable employ. "No, how could you be so self-centered, so stupid, so careless," I cry out. "You should be cut off!"

"You are attracting attention," he says, and points to two lovers sprawled on a beach blanket over a hundred yards away. Are they looking up? "Let us go back to the safehouse. I will try to explain."

"Just remember that you are not indispensable. You are obliged to explain."

He does. We sit there in the safehouse. After her living room, these grim government furnishings support me like a good starched shirt. I realize suddenly that my threats of unemployment have put no small fear into Chevi. We are now paying him one hundred dollars a week which, with expense chits, often comes to one hundred and twenty, or more, and he could hardly afford to give this up. I speak, however, of but half of his motivation--the other, as he talks, is obviously connected to Libertad. "It is true," he says, after I have

slashed through several of his preambles as if chopping brush, "it is true. I was attempting to make you of use to me, and that is a breach. The fundamental relationship dictates that I must be of use to you. One should not violate the fundamental relationship."

"Why did you?"

"Because she requested the meeting."

"Then you have a similar relationship with her?"

"That is true. Fundamental relations came into collision."

"Which, then, is most fundamental?" I demand.

"Can one know?"

He commenced to tell me a story. He had known Libertad for more than half his life. They had gone to school together in La Teja. In his first year at the university, they had been lovers. She had adored him. Then he had left to go to New York. When he came back, she was a prostitute. He would see her and never have to pay money. Still, it was awful. Then she decided to become a great prostitute and went to Havana. When she returned, she was no longer in love with him. She merely liked him. He was entrapped. "I despise her," he said, "but I lack the power to tell her no. She has become una mujer sin alma."

-61-

That, too, was a lie. The abrupt ending of my letter to Kittredge was not due to my desire to return a punishment. Rather, I had become enmeshed in double-entry reporting, and did not know how to continue. The letter, after all, had commenced with a fabrication. Chevi and I had not met that night as the result of a phone call, and I had been attempting ever since to be fair to the balance in my account, a common enough practice when writing Agency reports. If, for some reason, you could not tell the truth, if, for instance, you

hired Gordy Morewood to do a specific job after the Groogs had told you to let him cool his heels, yet you knew he was the only man available for the necessary, why, then, you gave him another name temporarily and paid him out of a new file, while rendering a partly infelicitous account of the local operation, although you did hope it would do minimal damage to operational mentality back at the Groogs. Double-entry reporting. An art, and rare was the man in the field who did not practice it on occasion.

Now, I had put Kittredge on double-entry. I could not possibly have begun my last letter with a true description of El Cielo de Husar', so I had made up an imaginary phone call from Chevi to explain our meeting. Then I suppressed a critical passage between Libertad and myself which transpired not fifteen minutes after I met her. Indeed, right after Chevi, at her behest, I expect, had closeted himself in her gold and marble bathroom for a good twenty minutes, she proceeded to divest me of a further layer of innocence by conferring on me one royal gift of her arts--fellatio. We had not been alone for a minute before her hand was on my knee, and her fingers were walked over to the buttons on my fly. I will not give the details--I do not care to write them down even on the pretense to myself that it may be a legitimate aspect of

depth of the magnetic field her mouth and lips had put upon the nether parts. At its best, I had felt, I confess, like a superbly prepared canvas upon which a truly notable artist was laying the most purposeful strokes. To make up for any real loss in my account of such--yes, I now knew the meaning--of such exquisite pleasure, I had inserted a double-entry into Libertad's initial impact upon me. Impact was large, but not so wholly overpowering as described. Her aura had not passed over to me "as if the act had already commenced," no, strike that as if. Rather, I was only to feel that deep concentration of presence which enables one to speak of a goddess after her mouth brought all of me into focus. It was then that I could no longer take my eye off the turns of expression on her face. All that beauty! All that hard implacable will to rule the world! I had seen it in lesser delineation on many another whore's face as she gave herself to fellatio.

At any rate, Libertad had done me a favor, and was irked that I would not repay it by an introduction to Hunt. We left her place because she was tired of us, which is to say, me, and my quarrel with Chevi, on the beach and in the safehouse, is comprehended better--no matter one's skills at double entry --now that the missing portion is inserted into its proper place.

"Surgical?" I repeat.

"Si."

"Where?"

"In Sweden."

"Have you?" I want to ask if there is a passage. My questions jostle for position in my brain.

"She can assume the fundamental position," Chevi says mournfully. "But only in the dark. Only with her hands. She oils them. She performs some magic with her fingers. She bragged to me once that she had seventy men in Las Vegas in thirty days, and not one was aware that he had not in fact entered her. That it was un juego de manos."

"Legerdemain?"

"Yes. Prestidigitacion."

"Her breasts?"

"Hermaphrodites have breasts. In addition, she takes hormones."

"All right. I've heard enough," I said.

My emotions were so exceptionally crossed at this point that, Kittredge, wherever the sanctum of our feelings is located, I blessed you once again, for again I could feel the simultaneous existence of Alpha and Omega. I think without your concept to guide me, I might have thought I was on the

Montevideo, might now be compromised. I will finish this tomorrow night.

April 11, 1958

Faithful to my promise, Kittredge, I resume, and can tell you that the next day, Monday, (last day of March) did not go quite as expected. I had been prepared for a horrendous session with Hunt which would doubtless bring on a thirty-six hour stint with the Groogs on the encoder-decoder. Am I picnic-shy? I confess I was panicking; I even expected a visit from the Soviet Russia Division.

Hunt, however, was not at the office. Mid-morning, he called in to tell us that he would remain for another day at Amilcar Redondo's estancia where he had been visiting over the weekend. Nancy Waterston, who was the recipient of these tidings, was pleased to mention that Howard had also told her why. He was hobnobbing with Señor Benito Nardone, who, Nancy confided, was going to be the next leader of Uruguay. So had Hunt confided to her.

"As for the rest of the gang," Porringer muttered to me, "just keep to your dumb and daily tasks."

Sometimes, on such mornings, a second-rate seaport like Montevideo can certainly serve as the representative cloaca of our filthy world. Emissions seem to exude constantly from every vent into the evacuative seas. Or is this describing my awful mood.

After another venting operation, which consisted of listening to Porringer gripe about Hunt--"He thinks we are nothing but piss-ass wage slaves."--I did get down to business at hand. What did he, Porringer, know about Libertad?

"There's very little I don't know about her," he stated. "I can give you the story from asshole to appetite." Have I yet communicated his intermittent use of Oklahoma-isms? When in doubt, he will certainly employ them, but underneath all his I-am-simple Sooner pretensions, Sherman wants to improve himself. He borrows little bits and pieces from all the tongues. "Yes," he goes on, "I can putty up the holes, but why should I?"

"Why not?"

"Recall us, brethren, to the need-to-know," Porringer says. Yes, he has all the hincty nasalities of a successful graduate student who has been sitting on more bibliographical references than you can ever muster. He actually pats his stomach. "I am holding," he says. "You open."

He nodded to himself as if Judge Porringer, having taken an agreeable recess, was now deciding in favor of the suppliant. "Well," he said, "this is a story to breed questions. I have been around a little longer than you, so I depend less on the powers-that-be. Unlike others I could name, I do my homework from time to time. And I didn't like this Libertad business from the git-go. Peones could have any whore in Montevideo--I mean, he is more dedicated to rank pussy than I am. So what was he looking for? A freak. It had to be. During our wooing period with Peones, I sent inquiries up to Havana about the lady, and all I got back was cover-up. In consequence, I decided to bypass standard sources and check with a properly sited friend in Western Div. It took him a while, I fear. Libertad was back with Peones before my friend could furnish me with the primary material. But I did learn that our bottleneck was put in by her Havana protector--a big Texas crony-joe of the American Ambassador down there. The Texas crony was covering her up. 'Well, call in a few of your Havana debts,' I said to my friend. He did. He squeezed a little real juice out of Havana Station. So I discovered, if a little too late, that Libertad was one more drag-queen hermaphrodite who had gone to Sweden to get her fire-hose turned inside-out."

Libertad's Texan is big enough for the Agency to conceal his name. Maybe, he buys and sells Senators. Maybe he owns some of the Texas Mafia. Maybe he's half the oil-fields in the off-shore waters. All I can tell you is that he was kind of embarrassed. So, our people in Havana are satisfied that Libertad went back to Montevideo. No follow-up. They don't want to go back to the roots. Howard is witting, but don't remind him that he knows. Not so long as Peones is our tried and true fullback who will always get us the three yards we need in any back alley scrimmage." He burped. "Looks like we're coming around to you again, joven. Concerning AV/OCADO, I would say that I am worried, but only in the way of a coach whose team is still ahead. We're holding, and we have to analyze the options. Is the picture essentially the same, or muy drastico? I lean to the first option. I would assume Chevi is still reliable. Could you say there is any possibility that he is a double agent?"

"It doesn't add up," I said. "Why would the PCU wreck its own ranks just to build a double agent who does not lead us, but merely feeds us?"

"He led you to Libertad."

"True."

"All the same, I kind of agree. It doesn't add out. All that finesse to set up a double agent in Montevideo? Not worth it. I think we have to take first things first." He reflected, and then he repeated somberly, "First things first."

Kittredge, I've noticed the odd remarks that people repeat on occasion. I wonder if it's not the double, if separate, assent of Alpha and Omega, a way of saying, yes, all of me is behind this, first Alpha, now Omega, both parties accounted for. "Yes," Porringer decided, "let's keep the lid on. You and me will live with this. We don't want to get Howard upset. He'll end up calling for people from Western Division to look it over, and then he'll be furious at the fuss they'll raise because we did business with Peones and Libertad. On the other hand, if AV/OCADO blows up, you and me will catch most of it. Well, we certainly get it now if we tell, and only later if it blows up. It may not. Chevi, however, has to stay away from her. He must. He will, once you make it triple crystal clear that if we don't like the way he's carrying on, his ass is in Peones' iron hands."

We shook our iron hands on that, and quit Café Trouville. I would fill you in on what has happened since, but it has all been quiet. Nothing new has occurred. Kittredge, we're caught up to date.

-62-

April 20, 1958

Harry, dear Harry,

Your letters tell me much and offer an island of contemplation away from my work. It's the truth. Bizarre as your days have been lately, they seem normal next to my chores. I know I am being outrageously secretive, but I can't tell you anything. I'm so girded about with vows of absolute silence concerning The Project that I hesitate to disturb the webs and

nets. I don't believe I'm thinking of Agency retribution. It's more a question of roiling the gods.

Angel man, I have this uneasy fear I may never be able to tell you. Then, on other days, I think, I'm going to burst if I don't pass it on. You must, however, not stop writing your letters. It's going to get one-sided, I fear, because soon I won't be able to get to our post office--I will be far away from Washington.

I repeat: Please keep writing nonetheless. If it's a quiet life in Montevideo, it is certainly an interesting one. Your days are so full of continuing intrigues. I love accompanying you, if at an epistolary remove, through the purlieus of dear old Uruguay, even if, since the first letter, you have barely described the place. That's fair, however. That's how we are in daily life. We go through it. We use daily life, but do not notice it. Tell me about the estancias, however. I'm curious to know what Howard is like when he hobnobs with the landed. Are they awful, or rather nice?

Love to you, dear man,

Kittredge

P.S. More I think of it, more I come to the conclusion that you need only write to me on the first of each month. Very

long letters, please, to make up for the time concerned, but it's the only way right now. I am going to ask a trusted girl friend to go to the P.O. box and pick up your monthly missive and forward it to me. Call yourself Frederick Ainsley Gardiner on the return address. But with the same box number. I'll explain to Polly--it's Polly Galen Smith who'll be fetching--that Frederick is my secret brother, natural son from a hole-in-the-wall affair my father had eighteen years ago, and dear young Freddy is now living in Uruguay where Daddy supports wife and beloved bastard and allows them to use his last name. It's an awful thing to do to dear Daddy (although I suspect he's been living in such fantasies all his life) but it's just the sort of story Polly will believe. You met her at dinner once with her husband. He's Agency, of course--remember him?--very tall and solemn as an owl, but sterling family stuff (if only he weren't so dull!). She's my old college roommate and, for a Radcliffe girl, absolutely ditsy about sex. Has affairs with conspiratorial panache, but does get loose-mouthed when she is impressed with the name of her lover. (Is that a common human failing, queries your innocent Kittredge who has only Montague's half-bald scalp on her belt!) Polly is having loads of hanky-panky now with Jack Kennedy, who, all the papers say, is going to make a serious run for the Democratic

nomination in 1960. I can't believe it, not Jack Kennedy, that beau hasn't done a day's work in the Senate since he's been there, but one can't blame him--he's such a boon to the ladies. Polly can't keep from bragging about her oh-so-clandestine rendezvouses with Jack. She's obviously not trustworthy at keeping any secret whole, but if she does blab about Frederick Ainsley, it'll lack interest. Who here in these ordinative swamps would care about my father's supposed pecadillos? Daddy would hate to hear it, but Washington has never thought twice about Harvard's most distinguished Shakespearean.

Anyway, dear Freddy A., I adore you, and we will have better days. Just remember to send your letter once a month. Start on June 1. Don't even know where I'll be on May 1.

Love again,

K.

P.P.S. To repeat: I won't write anything for a while. Trust me.

I did not know if I could. I thought there had been somewhat too much enjoyment in her tone as she went on about Jack Kennedy. It occurred to me for the first time that for

all I really knew, Kittredge might also have a beau. On the evidence of this last letter, whatever the disruptive perils of her new work, she was in inescapable good if curious spirits. Or was this just the manic front for an oncoming storm? The only pleasure I could take from her letter was my recognition that passion, if measured by the intensity of one's jealousy, made me a passionate man.

The loneliness that followed upon this perception had the power to return me to work; for a time, I quit all excursions to cat-houses and used the night hours to catch up with a myriad of tasks.

The subtle shock of forcing myself back into a grid of files and cryptonyms was not subtle, however. I felt as if I were back in my first weeks at the Station. Yet I also welcomed the office monotony. Hunt was building a file of Uruguayan citizens with whom we had engaged in one or another kind of relations. Soon, we began to add the names of many with whom we had none. Better to be comprehensive than precise. Pedro Peones was furnishing police records, and AV/OUCH fed us by way of Travel and Passport Control, AV/ERAGE did the lists for society and cafe society. Much came in on the Uruguayan military by way of AV/FIREBOMB, a new agent recruited and run by Hunt himself. FIREBOMB gave us much new

meetings over the smallest gains or losses in our war. He certainly saw it as a war. I, no matter how I wished to feel somewhat more combative, looked upon the Russians and ourselves, at least in Uruguay, as rival portfolios of stocks. Each day our averages went up or down in respect to the other. Hunt, however, hearing bad news, could take on a sudden resemblance to one of those long-nosed basketball coaches whose team is coming apart on the floor. In compensation, Hunt could also offer the kind of special warmth that only the truly sour-faced bestow when they smile.

Gatsby, therefore, with his piece of luck, was fair-haired among us for a fortnight. That proved all right with me. L'affaire Libertad still seemed essentially unstable--what if Peones found out about Fuertes? I was content, therefore, to relinquish the foreground to others. Gatsby, never much esteemed by Hunt, was entitled to all the luck he could find. In truth, we were always measuring our respective importance at the Station by the eminence of our agents, and very much in the manner, I fear, that a serious hostess will calculate the desirability of her guests. Running AV/OCADO, I held the honors even if I'd only inherited Chevi from Roger Clarkson, and Porringer could lay claim to cultivating Peones, our heavyweight, even if it was Hunt who brought him in, but up

till now, Gatsby had only developed two medium-rank agents; the rest of his contacts were what Gordy Morewood called rubbish collectors.

One of Gatsby's middling agents, AV/LEADPIPE, now struck gold for the Station. Indeed, LEADPIPE happened to be a gold smuggler. Since he was always crossing illegally from Uruguay to Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, it was assumed he would prove of use to us sooner or later. By the nature of his work, he had to keep illicit ties with Federal Police and customs officials. One could never know when one of his corrupt officials might be squeezed into service.

LEADPIPE now informed Gatsby that there was an official in the Foreign Ministry who could obtain blank passports for us. Did the Station wish to buy a few Uruguayan passports? We certainly did. Obtaining foreign documentation was a standing objective. Yes, Hunt told Gatsby, buy five, and get LEADPIPE to give you the name of the official putting them up for sale. When the name came back, it was Plutarco Roballo Gomez. Our office came alive.

LEADPIPE's car was enriched with a bug. During the next meeting, following Gatsby's instructions, LEADPIPE kept asking Gomez to repeat the serial number of each passport.

"My point," he told us, "and I can repeat it till you are all sick of listening, is that secrecy sometimes has to take a back seat to propaganda. Because of Gomez, we used to be the laughing stock of Montevideo; now, they laugh from the other side of the mouth. They perceive us differently. And what counts is how they perceive us. Let's keep the image that we are dangerous to our enemies, devoted to our principles, and just too damn tricky to keep up with."

My good luck came next. Over at the Russian Embassy, Varkhov had been acting untypically. Five times in three days, repeated GOGOL, he had left the Embassy for an hour, only to return bearing an annoyed expression. I decided to look into this. We had maintained liaison these last six months with the local grocery where most of the Soviet Embassy personnel purchased their food. The son of the shopkeeper, at the urging of his father, had been studying Russian for several years, but when Hyman Bosqueverde informed me that the father could no longer afford the lessons, I arranged to pay for the boy's instruction out of petty cash. The opportunity to have a rubbish collector in place to chat with the Soviets was too good to pass up. I even gave the boy a cryptonym at Hunt's insistence. Howard was all for carrying a full complement of saddlebags. It could only make us look more impressive back at

are wealthy individuals I consider sympathetic to us. They have varied holdings in this city. I want you to use a realtor whom Varkhov has gone to already, and put him together with the most suitable rentals that you can come up with by way of this list."

"Howard, it may be time to pass it on to Gordy Morewood."

Hunt hated the idea, but knew I was right. Morewood had the means to locate Varkhov's realtors, and was presumably under better cover.

"God, I hate that chiselling son of a bitch," said Howard.

Gordy, as usual, gave good results and, as usual, overcharged us. He presented us, however, with a small but attractive ground floor apartment in a small villa on Calle Feliciano Rodriguez owned by an old gentleman named Don Bosco Teófilo Blandenques. The real estate agent promptly introduced Varkhov to him, and the lease went through. A great find for the Russian. Varkhov negotiated fiercely and ended up paying considerably less rent than his half of the villa was worth. Don Bosco, briefed by Hunt, proved enough of an actor to convince Varkhov that he accepted this hard bargain because of gambling debts. Don Bosco knew, of course, that we would make up whatever was lost in rent.

We also had to obtain the good gentleman's permission to install a few sneakies. No ordinary installation would do; Hunt wanted "a comprehensive high-efficiency audio op." Not only did that involve flying a couple of technicians in from Headquarters, but it called for a tricky piece of salesmanship by Hunt and myself. Don Bosco did not mind the risk of the Russian association, he informed us. That was on the side of his pride. He had no fear of Varkhov should the Soviet discover his true role. "I would invite him to a duel. I have not engaged in such a confrontation for twenty-eight years, but that can only be attributed to the fact that I have faced each minute of each day of all the days in these last twenty-eight years with the complete understanding within myself that I am obligated to demand such a duel from any person who would ever presume to speak improperly to me. This vow has provided me with an equanimity that is visible to others, and thereby serves to deflect any passing fool's intention to send an insult in my direction." Speaking in Spanish, the arc of Teótimo Blandenques' sentiments seemed to flow in parallel to the curve of his sweeping white mustache. He looked so much like a South American grandee of the nineteenth century that I could feel myself savoring him for description to Kittredge in my next letter.

brought such intensity of purpose into glaring at Hunt, that I expect he used up his reserves for the day. He was seventy years old, after all. So as the meeting went on, noble implacable Omega gave way in Don Bosco to Alpha, the rentier. and by the end of the repast, Howard had obtained permission to install the equipment. We would have to pay an overcharge of thirty per cent, and make reparations afterward to any walls, woodwork, stone foundations or molding disturbed by the audio installation.

"The old thief," said Howard. "I'll bet he asks Gordy Morewood to represent him on the reparations committee."

I was frightfully depressed that night. While there was nothing to keep me from writing to Kittredge whenever I wanted, then saving the pages for June 1, I realized that a letter which could not be sent off so soon as it was completed did not seem to serve as much purpose. Besides, I was missing Kittredge physically. On successive nights, I awakened from a dream in the midst of making love to her. That had not only never happened before, but, I was shocked at the carnality we expressed. It was all too worthy of a brothel. I was realizing that when I did not send letters to her, my daily activities lost interest, and no longer seemed worth writing about.

June 1, 1958

Dear Kittredge,

I wish I could say a multitude of events have whisked me right up to June 1, but that, I fear, is hardly so. You are the witch-goddess who keeps our Station humming so long as I send letters to you. When I cease, it all seems to stop.

Of course, a few things did appear large at the moment, although close to insignificant one week later. Vice President Nixon stopped in Montevideo on his South American junket, and Hunt took him on a tour through our Embassy quarters, savaging Station cover pretty completely, I expect, by giving outrageous thumbnail sketches of each of us to Mr. Nixon and Mrs. Nixon as, viz., "This is Sherman Porringer who can tell you anything you want to know, Mr. Vice President, about Uruguayan labor unions, how to break them, and how to build them up again once we get rid of their leftists."

Porringer, bless him, was so embarrassed that he hee-hawed like an Oklahoma mule.

"Good democratic spirit in some of these unions?" asked Nixon.

"Well, I wouldn't say no to that," said Porringer. He's been working for a couple of years with all variety of trade-unionists, ultra-left, left, liberal, central, even a couple of Ruralista trade unionists, and we've heard his harangue in the office three times a week on average: "Stubborn stupid labor sons of bitches, Uruguayan mules." Now, Hunt tells him right in front of Vice President Nixon, "Well, if you wouldn't say no to that, try saying yes."

"There's bona fide democratic spirit around," Porringer manages to mutter.

Hunt, who is standing with Mr. and Mrs. Nixon in the archway between our outer and inner working office, chooses to say his piece in front of all of us rather than bringing Dick and Pat back to his office--I don't know if it's nervousness, bravura, or the calculation that if he's working with us, he might as well impress us too, but, in any event, as Chief of Station, he's entitled to his two-minute aria before turning the Vice President back to our new Ambassador (more on him in a short while) so Hunt clears his throat as vigorously as a servant sweeping dead leaves out of the potentate's path, and delivers himself of this: "Mr. Vice President, I am going to presume on this occasion to restore for you a wholly minor incident in your busy life, but I am recollecting an evening in

Harvey's Restaurant when my wife Dorothy, and I, repairing there for a bit of after-theatre supper, happened to encounter the great good luck of being seated near to you and Mrs. Nixon. May I say that on impulse, I leapt to my feet, walked over to your table, and introduced myself. You were kind enough to invite my wife and myself to join you."

"Howard Hunt, I recall that occasion very well," said the Vice President.

Kittredge, to me, it did not look as if he did. Nixon has a deep voice that makes you think of some valuable drillers-bit that is packed back in oil immediately when not in use; the lubrication slides him through many an embarrassing episode. A politician's life has to be filled with half-recollections, wouldn't you think? So many people. At any rate, his voice had come out as smarmy as a British radio announcer stating, "And now, Her Majesty is passing the expectant throng," but his eyes sent one quick signal to wife Pat, and she, lean as whipcord, and as efficient, I would expect, as a complete file attached to a receive-and-send apparatus, said, "Yes, Dick, it was on the night four years ago that you addressed the Society of Former FBI Agents."

"Indeed," said Dick, "a sterling group, SFFA, and not so slow on the draw when it came to the question period."

politics by watching what he does, or should I say, what Dick and Pat do together. Taken by himself, he has the most highly developed Alpha I've encountered, but the Omega, Kittredge, is naught but uncharted tracts. Or so I fear. Maybe that is why his critics say he is phony. When you shake hands, Nixon's eyes look into yours, and he smiles, yet only half a human being crosses the gap.

Not long after he left our town, Nixon was stoned in Caracas, then spit on and jeered in Lima. (Since I don't know where you are, I can't be certain you heard about it.) Hunt, however, is convinced that the impact back home has to be enormous: "There is now no doubt. He has locked up the Presidency." I wonder if Howard is considering a resignation from the Agency in order to work for Nixon in 1960. He's terribly dissatisfied these days and the cause is our new Ambassador, a nicely-tailored specimen named Robert Woodward. Hunt, however, may have been sent advance warning; he was complaining about Woodward even before arrival. "We're getting another eminent nonentity," was Howard's initial description. "The man's ambassadorial credentials consist of a stint in Costa Rica."

Woodward, however, was no nugatory presence. He ties into a State Department bloc who are flat-out opposed to the Agency.

I was not there for the historic meeting with Woodward on April 21, but can tell you that it's been bureaucratic trenches for Station ever since. Woodward came in "convinced," as Hunt puts it, "that I'm connected to the overthrow of Guatemala's Communist regime. 'I am, sir,' I told him, 'and never knew I was supposed to apologize for that.'"

Woodward then told Hunt that he disapproved of American intervention. "And now, I'm obliged to ask, what mischief are you fomenting down here?"

"I," Howard told us, "replied to him, 'my mandate does not extend to overthrowing a friendly government, sir.'"

Woodward then gave a lecture which Howard will be dining out on for years. "'Mr. Hunt, please recognize,'" goes Howard's imitation, "'that this country of Uruguay is the finest democracy extant in South America, and while it is small in size, there are few nations who can lay claim to being as well-run, as clean of corruption, and so much of a model to less fortunate small nations. Uruguay is the Switzerland of South America.'" Howard repeats all this for Gatsby and Kearns, Porringer, Waterston, and myself, and repeats, "Clean of corruption! Why, these welfare state crooks pass a law that allows every representative in the Legislative Assembly to

purchase a new foreign car every year free of duty. What is that worth when they sell it? Ten thousand extra frogskins?"

He's right, of course. Uruguay is corrupt. We were out at one estancia I am going to write to you about, and the haciendado, a distinguished South American gentleman, Don Jaime Saavedra Carbajal, is not above herding thousands of his cattle over the Jaguar River into Brazil, in that manner saving untold customs duty. In a word, smuggling. The border police certainly have to be bought off. Howard doesn't disapprove, however. It reminds him, he says, of how the first great Texas fortunes were built. I don't see how this alters the judgement, but then, it's not the day to argue with Howard. The real problem is that Station used to have its way on just about anything we wanted. While we didn't mingle all that much with State Department personnel, they did look up to us. We were not unlike the equivalent of the in-group in high school, a subject I used to hear about at parties from Porringer's wife Sally who apparently spent her adolescence on the cusp between the ins and the outs, a pointy seat to hear her tell it. At any rate, we could always recharge a sense of our own charisma by just trotting over to any one of the offices in the Embassy; the boys there, whether thirty years old or sixty, were properly resentful, and the State Department ladies, grateful.

I never invited any of them out in the firm belief that they were merely sharpening their noses on the grindstone of marriage-to-a-fine-young-American-in-government-service, but it was fun to flirt.

Now, our status is different. We've become the greaser gang. If State Department people were uneasy with us before, it was because they felt--I'll be brutal about it--a little inferior, at least in terms of ultimate survival; now they act hollow and over-friendly, as if they are our social superiors, but don't want us to know it because greasers can wreck property. Two weeks ago, Hunt was notified that Woodward, and his new deputy, will attend all the foreign embassy functions, and Hunt can, in effect, take a well deserved rest in the evening and enjoy his family. Needless to say, this removes us from the foreign embassy circuit, a blessing--I'll be able to read a book--but social ostracism does have its bite even if you don't mind what you are being cut out of. Hunt is, of course, inwardly livid, and compensates by visiting the estancias every weekend. To our surprise, he has begun to take us along. Now, in the halls, the State Department city dwellers truly look askance at us; we come back from these weekends with some inescapable patina of the pampas. From greasers to gauchos.

political ideas here at the university. Nardone, who has a high forehead, a pronounced widow's peak, long nose and sensuous lips with their own widow's peak in the cleft, plus dark inverted V-shaped eyebrows, and large, somewhat haunted, dark eyes, was not at all what I expected. At worst, he looked like the classiest gangster on a movie lot. Am I thinking of George Raft?

All the same, I discover that Benito does love theoretical discussion. Expounding his views on Sunday night to the local hidalgos, Nardone did not merely fulminate against Marx, Lenin, the Communist Party and the Soviets, but told his audience that his studies when young took him back to Proudhon, Bakunin and Saint Simon. When young, he, Benito Nardone, used to listen to debates between anarchists and Communists and so came to know the faults of both. His audience, "worth mucho millones," Hunt whispers, listen with a pleasure that is surprising to me. I have gotten to know a few of them over a long Saturday afternoon and they are surprisingly simple to me. They love to hear what they want to hear--I guess all politics is built on that--but what surprises me is how much they fear Communism, and not only as a threat to their own wealth, but as an intellectual, even a spiritual, threat. Do they all wake up in

the middle of the night saying to themselves, "What if those Reds are right?"

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let me discuss the weekend as it evolved. We left on Saturday morning with, on this occasion, just Dorothy Hunt in the back seat, and myself riding shotgun, Howard driving his Cadillac as if it were a Jaguar, seat erect and far back, arms extended and both hands on opposite sides of the wheel, a pair of leather driving gloves somberly pulled on before we embarked, (this last with at least as much ritual as a surgeon laving his hands in preparation for the scalpel.) Then we motored north over a variety of inland roads, some good, some in crying need of revampment, but a fast hard drive of one hundred and fifty miles through small ubiquitous South American towns usually sleeping beside a river, usually dusty, and rarely broken by any sound larger than our even-breathing Cadillac motor; on either side of us, the pampas, a sea of grass which in the open distance between two towns, begins to seem a veritable outer space of grass. Dorothy, napping in the rear seat, snores ever so faintly, no more sound to it than one fly meandering in a summer pantry, but Hunt's nostril quivers at his wife's fall from top executive comportment--would Pat Nixon permit herself such liberties?

From the front seat in this slowly evolving landscape, the game I employ to stay awake is to focus on the crest of the horizon. The land is generally so flat that one can traverse five miles before topping the same low ridge that first appeared to be but a half-mile off; I keep estimating distance while listening to Hunt discourse. He is full of Fidel Castro these days. It looks as if Castro may yet take Cuba--Western Hemisphere Division is full of analyses to that effect--and Hunt is grumbling over the laissez-aller attitude on high.

"They don't know what they're getting with this guy. I sniff Communism in his equipaje." (Which last is Howard's fancy word for crew.) "There's a Castro lieutenant called Guevara, Che Guevara, whom we gave safe passage to out of Guatemala along with Arbenz. That boy is more of a lefty than Lefty O'Doul. Watch Castro. A Communist. I'm sensitive to the plague."

I am counting the miles to the horizon. We talk of more than Castro, but I'll spare you. Hunt can repeat himself. At last we arrive at the gate to Don Jaime Saavedra Carbajal's estancia which announces itself by means of two mournful stone columns, each twenty feet high and twenty feet apart, there to honor, I suppose, the pitted dirt road that takes us a long slow way to the hacienda. A thirty-six hour party is commencing. Don Jaime is the wealthiest landowner in this

province, whose name, in case you care, is Paysandu and we have driven here by way of Durazno (as in Roderigo Durazno, a.k.a. Libertad). Carbajal, a powerful, sturdy man with a noble mustache, exudes hospitality. His wife, cold and gracious, does not. Hospitality is obviously not her joy but her duty, and her eyes suggest that the compliment she is offering on the meritorious quality of one's Spanish is such an egregious lie that she is entering the domain of mortal sin. It's an interesting concept. Can a hostess go to hell for telling too many agreeable lies? There is little opportunity, however, to contemplate this fancy. Food, drink, compulsory flirting on my part, is the going rule. "You will be our answer to the KGB joy-boys," says Hunt with a snigger, poking me in the ribs, and I pay court to young Spanish women as if I were a nineteenth-century artillery officer at a tea party, and indeed, I might as well be. Any romance with these protected señoritas would take three years of Sundays. Even the wives would cost you a year! Still, I flirt assiduously with the female folk of local ranchowners, local hidalgos, local industrialists (tanning factories) and local grain, feed and mill combine owners as we all (that is, the men) get drunk. I'm surprised at the low level of the guests, which is to say that the money seems to have accumulated faster than the old

medieval chateau seat. It also reminds me, if on a larger scale, of a Maine summer home.

Nardone is an enthusiastic horseman as is Hunt--the male company spends a good part of Saturday evening talking about horses. In the morning, we all go out for a pick-up polo game in a surprisingly wellgroomed close-cropped meadow with goal posts, and I have all I can do to get out alive. I've never advertised myself as a horseman, and the competition, while spotty--one or two real polo players, in addition to several fine horsemen of whom Hunt and Nardone, I have to tell you, make two--are filled out by a string of substitutes like myself who are brought in and removed more quickly than the polo ponies. Howard had taken me out twice on the polo field in Carrasco and gave me some elementary instruction, but now it is hardly enough. Under game pressure, I am just about hopeless getting mallet to ball. Hunt takes me aside to whisper, "Don't try to hit anything. Just ride the other fellow's nag off the play." I follow his advice and discover that if not always successful, at least I'm beginning to have fun. This is the first rough exercise I've taken on in more than a year, and I love it. I can feel my father's combative blood once more (which is what I think happiness is all about for me at least). The moment I'm ridden out, I gallop gung-ho all over the place

trying to find the man who outmaneuvered me. These epiphanies of martial lust, horse to horse, man to man, come to their climax when I'm chucked from my steed pretty abruptly and land on my back, all the wind knocked out, a most curious sensation of choking passively as chargers veer overhead, their hooves going by like sledge-hammers. God, even in my breathless state I saw the eyes of the horse who came closest to running me over. He, too, had a divided heart, half in panic that he would hurt me (and himself), half in a fury to go right through my supine feast of torso.

Well, I had to take the next two chukkers off, but when I returned to the game, the wives and daughters and older hidalgos on the sidelines, and the players and the substitutes, all applauded, and Hunt came up to put his arm around my shoulder. Suddenly, I am in love with myself, with risk, with all the sensuous revelations of pain. I ache all over and feel virtuous.

That was the high point of my day, weekend, and month. Later, I feel considerably stiff, and my body keeps haranguing me in a dull misery. Some gauchos, under invitation from Don Jaime, ride in from wherever they were working and proceed to give us an exhibition of what can really be done with a horse. I am struck with the purity of their faces, by which I do not

mean that they are angels, no, quite the contrary, they look like demons, bronzed and crazy demons. They all seem to have yellow eyes, although that may be in delayed response to my fall. I certainly see their resemblance to gypsies, circus folk and Hell's Angels. They all show the same wild happiness that comes, I think, from knowing any day could be their end.

Among the neighboring hidalgos and their women, there is much comment on the superior skills of the Uruguayan gauchos to the Argentinians. I, one of the centers of attention after my fall, try not to get caught in such opinions. Scratch any Uruguayan and you will find a huge inferiority toward Argentina. Uruguay has no mountains, whereas Argentina has the Andes; Uruguay is small, Argentina is vast; Montevideo has no exciting night life, Buenos Aires is the Paris of South America. So, once captured in conversations with Uruguayans, one is offered the predictable opinion that Montevideo is subtler than Buenos Aires. Uruguayan cattle feeds on better pampas grass. Und so weiter. I was not about to get into the relative merits of Arg versus Urg gauchos but Hunt, giving a toast at the Sunday evening barbecue, made a point of applauding those we had seen that day, "Yes," he said in Spanish, "your gauchos know how to get more from a good horse

than any Argentinian," and received the response he expected to arouse.

On Sunday night, after the barbeque, we come back to the house. Nardone makes his speech in the library as the men gather around brandy and cigars. Atmosphere is solemn--black leather tomes in near-black wooden bookcases. I decide that Nardone, son of the people, his father an Italian longshoreman from the docks of Montevideo, appeals to this group precisely because he is not one of them--he has no money, no family to back him, no title: By their lights, he should be a terrorist or a Communist, but having had youthful ties to that other left-wing world, he has left it to work first for the Colorado Party and then, continuing to the right, has become a Ruralista. As he swings into the core of his fund-raising speech, I can see the ball of money rolling downhill with more and more pesos adhering to it for he knows how to talk to the center of fear and wrath in all these hidalgos and hacendados: "In these times, a working man no longer thinks of passing on to his family more than was given to him. On the contrary, a working man's greatest inner question is whether to retire with partial security at the age of thirty-seven, or with full economic protection at fifty. Señores, we do not wish to be, nor can we be, the Switzerland or the Sweden of South America.

As a country, we are blessed, but not so especially well blessed that we can support a welfare state which encourages our people to march ever further into the marshes and swamps of welfare state inanition." They applauded him, and applauded a good deal more when he offered as contrast to the lazy corrupt life of Montevidean office-holders, the hard-working, honorable, virtuous industry of the herders and simple farm people in the pampas. Of course, I had been hearing all year from Colorados I met in the capitol that the farm workers were exploited unconscionably by the landed gentry. This political side of the evening put me, therefore, in a depression. I was obliged to realize how essentially ignorant I am about these matters, and even asked myself why I had joined the Company and given myself to it all these years--more than three years now--when I'm not really interested in politics, and in fact have exactly what I need in the way of understanding: For all our faults, I see the U.S. as the natural model of government for other countries. Nardone may have picked up a whiff of my thoughts since he ended by speaking of the North Americans who were here, esteemed guests of Don Jaime, and said he would now like to give his salute to that great nation of the north founded and maintained by individual initiative. He was applauded for this too, of course, but not I think so much out

my father took up the gun, put the sights on the rattlesnake's head, and encouraged me to pull the trigger. That snakeskin is still on my wall, and I still remember the bond of trust and affection I felt for my father as a ten-year-old boy.

"He was a brave man. Once, while practising law in Florida, his partner absconded to Havana with a sum of several thousand dollars. My father removed his Browning automatic from his desk drawer, put it in his pocket, bought a ticket on the Pan American plane that night to Havana, made a tour of the bars, and found his partner in Sloppy Joe's, a notable emporium, whereupon he walked up to his partner, put out his hand for the money, and was given back all that had not yet been lost in drink. Nonetheless, my father was a compassionate man. He did not ostracize that former associate, and would even share a drink with him in later years."

"Fénomenal," grunted a few of his auditors. "Precioso."

"Now, in Carrasco, two streets from my house, lives Colonel Jacopo Arbenz, back from the iron-curtain country of Czechoslovakia, with his wife and two daughters. Colonel Arbenz and I have even met at our local golf club, and I thought him somewhat unprepossessing, but then, he may not have a good opinion of me. I mention him only because I was instrumental in helping to overthrow him and his

Communist-sympathizing government in Guatemala four years ago, and now we nod to each other at the golf club. These are curious times. Communism all too easily becomes our neighbor. Yet, politics aside, I can never see that gentleman as my true neighbor. For I must think of his father. Colonel Arbenz's father committed suicide by filling his mouth with water, putting the muzzle of a pistol to his lips, and pulling the trigger. That mode of self-execution guarantees the most prodigious disarray of after-effect." (I translate from desarreglo prodigioso de efecto resultante, a nifty linguistic display by Hunt. The caballeros present grunted their acceptance of such genteel and quintessentially Spanish description of horrific mess.)

"Señores, I tell this tale not to take pleasure in Colonel Arbenz's family misfortunes, but to point out the differences between our fathers. I speak as a patriot, partial to my side, but I would propose that the difference between our two philosophies, freedom and authoritarianism, are as the differences between the two fathers."

"Hola," cries that crowd.

After which follows billiards, snooker, and bed. In the morning, we return to the city.

On the drive back, I realize that I have been living a most contained and ironically, a most secluded life in Uruguay, and that is the way I have wanted it. With the exception of the polo game, I did not really enjoy this visit to an estancia. I am three-quarters a city man, I discover to my gloom--Maine summers did not make a whole Indian of me. Living on preordained paths, and working with my head over a desk may be to my liking more than I am willing to admit. This is a shock for me, and I discover it again as I write to you now. The pampas on a daily basis would bore me. Oh, there were quiet vistas where a stream curved around a grove of white-leaved cottonwoods, and the sun gave a pale gold light to the tall grass; barbecues under the stars do take on a quintessential reek of meat and smoke in the night air. The act of eating enters the true spirit of the carnal; one is a pagan and close to the animal; I am also thinking, however, of some of the poor villages we saw in the distance as we were riding, and they were shanty poor with tin roofs that banged like loose shutters in every strong breeze. There is a prevailing wind out in these pampas called la bruja, (the witch) and it would drive me loco if I had to live out here. I remember Chevi fulminating against the hidalgos. "They make a fortune on meat and hides, and won't redistribute the land."

Kittredge, I hope this letter proves satisfying to you. I sense such a vacuum in myself these days, and your silence fills me with anxiety. In the pampas, listening to la bruja, I wondered what your situation could be and whether you were in peril, trouble, difficulty, or merely suffering like me from some small dislocation of the soul.

I swear, I do not know where to place such disorientation in the arcana of Alpha and Omega.

Cheers, love,

Harry

P.S. We came back to a late Monday at the office which proved to be of considerable interest. The technicians flown down from Headquarters have installed the audio op, tested the bugs, and they are, Kearns assures me, better than anything yet devised for this kind of tap. In a few days, Varkhov moves in. By next month, I may be able to tell you whether this villa has been rented for a love nest. Since one of the bugs is buried in a post of his four-poster bed, (took a cabinetmaker for the installation) I have to admit we at the Station are showing prurient expectation. I could let you know in ten days, but your strictures being what they are, July 1 will have to prove soon enough.

-63-

July 1, 1958

Dear Kittredge,

Well, it is a love nest, and Zenia and Georgi Varkhov are having a passionate affair. I'm amazed at how much I am feeling for Brishka Masarov. I call him Brishka because that is how Zenia refers to him, and, believe me, she now speaks of him often. One is almost inclined to say poor Varkhov, he has to hear so much about the husband whose wife he is presumably

despoiling. Of course, Porringer, reliable in-house cynic, makes a point of saying, "No woman ever got injured by a good fuck," a bracing piece of information, and wouldn't it be nice if it were true? Porringer might go places if only he had a sense of nuance. Why couldn't he have phrased it, "A certain kind of woman, etc." Anyway, his wife's pregnancy is affecting him adversely; he is back on his nightly tour of brothel row. And I have been given the monitor's role in AV/RATHOLE, which is the unbemused name Hunt has bestowed on an operation that has drilled sacrilegious holes into the integrity of Don Bosco Teotimo Blandenques' venerated walls. I don't know if I'm dealing with a comedy or a monstrosity. Can humans be held accountable for what they say in the midst of the act?

The mechanics often prove droll. We receive conversations from the living room, the kitchen, the dining room and the bedroom, and can even determine the location since each microphone offers its own beep at initiation of transmission. Of course, there are overlaps and gaps all over the place-- moves from one room to another, or Zenia or Georgi will rattle a plate, or, worse, the bedsprings take over. The Finnish Micks go over every day to pick up the tape from a one-room apartment we've rented in the adjoining house, and come back to their desk in our office to spend hours translating. Then, I,

having monitorial judgement, try to put it in better English without losing anything of prime value in the way of hard intelligence. Since the Sourballs will receive the raw Russian transcripts a day later in Washington and decide for themselves what is truly of value, I have to wonder why I am needed. I take this thought to Hunt who assures me that my little unhappiness is but a cavil, since this local output on which I work so hard is being sent to a couple of his primes in the Agency. I am not told who or what they are. We really have two networks of communication. Official, and, like yours, Oh So Clandestine.

The worst of it is we are getting virtually nothing of hard intelligence value from the transcripts. It is, indubitably, a love-nest. Varkhov goes there to forget about his office. Zenia goes there because she is "captive of exotic alien obsession." We hear a great deal about that. Varkhov, who comes through in the tapes as even cruder human stuff than anticipated--descended from a long line of serfs, his father rose to be a railroad engineer, that is, a locomotive driver, and he, Georgi, distinguished himself as a young if all but uneducated platoon Commissar, survived Stalingrad, and was some sort of hit-man or executioner for the NKVD during the Red Army's advance to Berlin. He's a butcher boy according to

Zenia's wrought description--he deals in "flesh, bones, and now you deal with me." She speaks mournfully and often about her inability to be in control of herself. "I read books concerning characterological collapse of women, but books do not warn sufficiently. Not Flaubert. Not even Tolstoy. Chekhov maybe. A little. Not enough. Dostoyevsky, the worst. No good for understanding sufferings of spoiled women mired in worship of devil's flesh."

"Who is a devil?" Georgi protests. "I am one man under impossible circumstances. I worship your husband for his wisdom."

"Not so much as you worship center of me, my pussy-hair. Liking what your nose finds? Brishka adores such. You no. Too scared. Strong man scared. Center of sin in pussy hair."

I'm sorry, Kittredge, but after the Finnish Micks do their literal translation, I am hard put to get it back into English. Even what Zenia and Georgi would sound like. That last in raw translation came to me as "turpitude in crotch-hairs, stinking crotch-hairs." Don't look to the Russians for the quintessentially delicate touch.

She upbraids Varkhov for quite a time as "nyet kulturny." I am familiar with the expression via Masarov and Gohogon of the Finnish Micks assures me that that is a forceful insult

among Russians--either you are a cultured person, or you are without culture. Nyet kulturny. Zenia feels degraded exactly because she is full of passion for this nyet kulturny, Varkhov. "I had five aunts, all ladies, all dead. Would faint if one look at you."

His replies to such remarks usually have to be inserted in the transcript as: VARKHOV. . . . (grunts)

I become sufficiently curious to get Gohogan to turn on the raw tape. Another element reveals itself. Zenia's words may be brutal, but her voice is soft, melodious, welcoming. His responding grunt is one of pure happiness, something like a hippo snorting in muck. Khorosho, he replies, which comes out much like a grunt itself when said in a hoarse voice.

"Horror-show," is how it sounds. In fact, Khorosho means OK, pure and simple OK.

"I disgrace my family."

"Khorosho."

"You are a dog."

"Khorosho."

"You are a pig."

"Khorosho."

"Specimen of greed."

"Khorosho, khorosho."

I begin to think of Peones. Is there a principle here? Do brutes look to be whipped? Is there a scale of inner justice?

"Tell me more," he says, "Am here to listen."

"Are unworthy."

"OK."

"Unworthy of my husband."

"Understood."

"You revolt me."

"I don't," said Varkhov.

"No, you don't. Come here. I need you."

Groans, heavy breathing, bed-springs. Maniacal cries at the end. (Yes, I do listen to the raw tape.) You cannot always tell which voice is which. "Fuck me, fuck me out of my heart. You are my liberty, my shit," cries Zenia, yes, it is her voice, and even on the tape I can feel her reaching from the hole in the center of herself to that place in the universe where perhaps there is something other than a hole. I don't know whether to be moved or appalled. Listening to the tape, I can feel the sweet nausea of her desire and wonder if I have pinched some unnatural nerve in myself.

Hunt visits my desk from time to time with exhortations to extract the nitty-gritty. "Restrict it to the gamy stuff. I

want to spear Boris in the pits. None of that fraudulent muck about 'how wonderful my husband is.' Hell, Harry, human perversity being what it is, a man can begin to forgive a wife if she keeps talking about him while she's with the other guy. So, just look for the Give-it-to-me-you- goddamn-great-fucker stuff. The good passages. We'll squash the heart right out of Brishka, that poor misunderstood KGB mass-murdering bastard."

So I commence editing. A fearsome product results. Another example, be it said, of the validity of K. Gardiner Montague's theses on A. and O. If I allowed myself, I'd be in a whirl of disturbed feelings about what I'm doing, but Alpha has taken over, Alpha appears to thrive on the excitement of bringing off a good job with obdurate, even repellent material. Not that this is entirely repellent. Kittredge, in honesty, I am not unmoved by the depth of Zenia's voice. Can you imagine me ever admitting this to anyone but you? Yet our good Reverend Hubbard has to confess that even Varkhov's grunts, listened to long enough, do strike human chords: tenderness in the midst of animal greed, sorrow in the heart of all his harsh curses. He comes--all right, I will tell all--shouting, "Whore, mothers-of-pigs, filth I fuck," incredible, awful stuff which evokes an aria of responsive ecstasies from her. If I allowed myself, I could feel diminished by the power of their

carnality. But I have my Alpha, good, determined work-soldier, and he runs the operation. It even becomes tedious piecing through the transcripts for what Hunt calls "good passages." With the aid of Gohogon, I find the equivalent bits on the tape and splice them. Then I listen to the sound scheme as if it were music. Of course, the cuts don't always work once you listen to the sound. Whereupon I have to play the raw tapes and try to find other moments of Russian sound that could bridge the transition. Since I don't know the language, my choices often make no great sense word for word, but miss by miss and bit by bit, I do patch together a workable, even overwhelming, if I must say, actualization of what Hunt was looking for. If he's been complaining every day at how long it takes, he is generous enough, old clam-lipped Howard, to express his praise finally at my good job. And I am pleased. Deep inside of Omega, hopelessly incarcerated, a sub-particle of my soul is mourning for Brishka, but Alpha has carried the day. Indeed, the week. I feel like a sound editor and/or radio director. I have created an interesting vocal work out of a garbage and chaos of sounds. I swear, before the power of a tough job well done, moral qualms have no more force than blades of grass. So it seems while working.

Now, of course, the question arises of what to do with the finished product. Hunt, predictably, is all for blasting Boris Masarov out of his socks. Send him the tape, and then no matter what happens we can count on a sizable profit. At the least, if he swallows it, he and Varkhov will have to work together. More likely, Masarov will attempt to have Varkhov sent back to Moscow, or will apply for return himself. Withdrawal of either man will cost the Soviets all kinds of time. Their replacements will have to pick up the local skills. Time consuming.

Of course, there is always the possibility that Varkhov can be blackmailed into working for us. Ditto Masarov. Could this tape so demoralize him about the value of his present life that he would consider defection?

Hunt argues sensibly that Boris is likely to look upon us as even more of an enemy than before. Hjalmar, "Al" Omaley, who has flown in from Soviet Russia Division again, is, of course, all on the side of working for a defection. The Sourballs are geared that way. Arguments go on between Omaley and Hunt that must reflect the scene at Headquarters between Western Hemisphere Division cum Groogs on one side, Soviet Russia Division on the other. I won't consume pages of this letter by listing any more of the debates, scenarios, lacunae,

and, via Omaley, paranoid accusations. I went through it once after the Masarov picnic and won't go near that again. Not even in a letter. Suffice it, there is one cute turn: Hjalmar is seeing Nancy Waterston every night, and Hunt, no longer knows whether to trust her. Un tour de drole.

In the middle of all this, arrives the following cable. Decoded, it reads:

To: AV/HACIENDADO

From: KU/GHOUL-1

CONGRATULATIONS ON RATHOLE. SPLENDID DEMOPO ON

AV/ATAR. NNR. FELICITATIONS ONLY. CCAVAILABLE.

Kittredge, I expect you're not as much of an old cable-hand as I have become by now, so I offer a trot. This is strictly nabob cablese. It is guaranteed to make us junior officers ask on high for the meaning of a couple of saddle-bags and/or acronyms that are not in the book. I suppose it separates out the medal-winners from the ribbon clerks. While AV/ATAR was Masarov, NNR meant no-need-to-reply, GHOUL-1 certainly had to be my esteemed godfather, and CCAVAILABLE sends, of course, a copy to AV/AILABLE (who is, if you remember, your own Harry Hubbard.) Still, who or what was

other hand, I am saying what he wants to hear. So he tends to believe me. Then shakes his head. "There's got to be more to this cable."

"Why," I asked, "don't you give him a ring?"

He sighed. I think he was a little reluctant. "This one calls for the closet with the red phone," he said at last.

I left Howard's office. In fifteen minutes, I was summoned back. He was in a glow. "Montague's not all that bad when he chooses to be forthcoming. Wants to speak to you now. Wants to congratulate you, too."

When I got on the safe phone, however, count on it, Howard was still hovering in his office. So I did not dare to close the door. Your own dear mate greeted me by saying in that oft-familiar tunnel voice, "Declare loudly how glad you are that I like it."

"Yessir," I said, "I'm awfully glad that you like it."

"All right," said Hugh, "enough of that. My cable was preamble to get you on the safe phone. I'm not keening in on RATHOLE. Masarov is made of the hard stuff. He will never defect. Common sense should prevail. Of course, Howard will go gung-ho sooner or later to hurt Masarov's feelings."

"Will it work?"

"Probably not. In any event, it's not my toy. I'm too thick in something else. Much afoot. I happen to have a query for you. How would you like to be transferred to Israel?"

"You don't mean it? Isn't that a plum!"

"Take it more slowly. It's very much Mother's show over there. As my representative, you'd be working uphill. However, I do hold a couple of slots. Not every last soul in the Mossad is enamored of Angleton. A couple of Israelis are more inclined to work with me."

"I suppose I had better think about this."

"You had better. On the positive side, the Mossad are the diamonds in the intelligence game."

"Yessir."

"You will come out a master, or broken."

"Broken?"

"Smashed." He paused. When I did not reply, he went on. "No question. It's Angleton's fief. Mother will dislike you pro forma. After all, I've sent you there. No way to keep that a secret. You will be the enemy as far as James Jesus is concerned." He pronounced Jesus as Hey-sooz, James Jesus Angleton.

"Why are you proposing I go then?" Unfortunately, I had to whisper this for fear Howard would hear me.

"Because you may survive. James Jesus does not hold all the cards. I've marked a few for myself."

"Can I think about it?"

"Brood. You're at a fork."

"How do we pick this up again?"

"Call Rosen. He's my slave Friday these days. Telephone him at TSS on one of your open lines. Harmless buddy-buddy conversation. Just a piece of Auld Lang Syne. If you've decided that Israel is go, you need merely remark, 'How I miss Maine now that I'm in Montevideo.' I'll take care of the rest."

"And if one decides in the negative?"

"Then, boy, don't use the code. Rosen will have nothing to report."

"Yessir."

"Two days to determine your mind." He hung up before I could ask about you, Kittredge. Not that he would have told me.

I will not try to describe the next two days. I felt exalted; I dwelt in terror. Angleton's reputation is easily as fearsome as your husband's, but then it may be Montague and Angleton's greatest honor that Agency people speak of them as legends without knowing what they have done. In the Company, I

am beginning to recognize, saints have to be enshrined on hearsay.

I did learn two things about myself in the next forty-eight hours. Dear Married Lady: I entered the abyss of my cowardice and smelled the noxious fumes therein; I climbed the highest peaks of my hitherto unglimped high ambition. I also thought of the day I played polo. I ended by telephoning Arnie Rosen at TSS on an open Station phone resolved to speak of my longing for Maine.

So soon as I got into that, however, he cut me off. "Forget all about the place," he said, "your request for leave is canceled."

"What?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Oh, oh, oh," he said.

"I can't bear this," I told him. "Give me some notion."

"It's your mother. Your mother forbids your trip to Maine."

"My real mother? Jessica?"

"Yes."

"She can't."

"Well, she doesn't exactly forbid you. She's the reason, but she's not the executor of the decision."

"Who is the executor?"

"Let's say it's your father." A pause. "Yes. Paradigmatically speaking." Another pause. "And your host sends deep regrets at being unable to send the plane fare."

I thought I could glimpse a picture, then wondered if I could. "Arnie, hit me one time more." We could have been trading favors for futures.

He was so good at this game. "Well," he said, and he did say well as if he were opening a door, "I, for one, would never be allowed to go to those woods."

"Why ever not?"

"They're too anti-Semitic in Maine."

That, somehow, offered enough. There was reason to feel the answer was going to make its way to me.

"Yes, and how is Kittredge?" I asked. "Have you and she made up?"

"Well, I'd love to, but she is far away."

"How far away?"

"Think of Australia and you'll be wrong. Ditto, Poland. I wish I could tell you where." He hung up.

A box of Havana Churchills arrived via embassy pouch two days later. Inside was a card in Harlot's immaculately small handwriting: "Your errant godfather." I had solved the question by then. Angleton might be Mother to many, but he was not my mother. Indeed, the reference had been spelled out to be Jessica Silverfield Hubbard. So Rosen, doubtless, was reminding me that I was one-eighth Jewish. As for my father? Paradigmatically speaking! That must refer to Company policy. Of course. The Company (our great surrogate father) would not send a Jewish case officer to Israel. Conflict of interest. I had no idea if this originated as an Agency determination, or came by request of the Mossad, or had been agreed upon by both. In any event, your own peerless Harlot had forgotten that a little part of me was Jewish until Personnel, bless them, brought it up. For a few days, Kittredge, I must say it was curious to think of myself as Hebraic.

On the other hand, even though I have been up to my neck with RATHOLE, I now have difficulty believing that I am wholly in Uruguay. Time here at the Station has begun to feel as if it is running down for me, even if I will be here for the longest while.

Such sense of disruption is curiously disturbing. I lean too hard on teleology. I have to believe I was born for a

purpose and will strive to reach a certain end, even if I can neither see the end nor name it. But I wish to see life as having purpose.

These days I really don't know what to think. Forty-eight hours in the scenario-factory of my mind were taken up with sending me to Israel, hours fraught with anxiety. All the same, I came to the conclusion that I would accept such a dubious, and conceivably career-smashing job because I felt that I was fated to go there. Then, abruptly, I discovered I wasn't destined at all. Knocked out on a technicality. It has left me in the most detached relation to RATHOLE. And don't you know, Kittredge, that may be just as well. RATHOLE seems in danger of decomposing even as we deal with it.

Let me catch you up. The Sourballs won the battle. Their decision prevailed: Try to get a defector out of this. We settled on Varkhov. Hunt carried that argument. Masarov, the old hand, he argued--was he influenced by Harlot?--would simply prove too difficult, too outraged. So we discussed how to approach Georgi. Porringer is for keeping one or another cab from AV/EMARIA on his chauffeured car. Sooner or later, Varkhov will stop at a cafe for lunch, and then Omaley and Gohogon, plus either Porringer or myself, summoned by a radio call from AV/EMARIA can move in on Varkhov, hand him the tape,

and a phone number, and tell him to play it absolutely for himself alone. We-can-all-be-friends will serve as the theme of this pageant. Hjalmar hates the very idea of such outright approach, and SR Division is behind him. Meetings, they argue, must be kept to a minimum. We could, of course, just mail it to Varkhov directly at the Russian Embassy, but how would we know he received it? Far better to have a cutout drop the package on Georgi as he is getting into his car at the Russian Embassy.

Hunt is totally opposed to this last suggestion. "Varkhov might have a bodyguard along. What if his bruiser grabs the cutout? That will attract so much attention, Varkhov won't have anything to do with us."

I suggest we use one of Don Bosco's villa keys to leave the tape in Varkhov's love nest. If the locks have been changed, we can hire a locksmith. Peones will give us back-up. Disadvantage: it could attract the notice of the neighbors. If that happens, the operation will be blown.

Of course, once we leave a tape, the love nest is into its last days, anyway. I propose that we send AV/ALANCHE-1, (leader of the sign-painters and a most trustworthy kid) over with Don Bosco's keys. We can do this at a time when we know, via GOGOL, that Varkhov's car is parked on the street back at

the Russian Embassy. AV/ALANCHE-1 need merely try the lock. Whether the keys work or not, he must depart immediately. We will know then, at least, whether we can open the door, or have to look for a locksmith.

First rate. My idea is implemented that Friday afternoon, and we learn the lock has not been changed. After the weekend, then, we will make our move. We've discovered by now that no matter how many times a week Don Bosco's villa on Calle Feliciano Rodriguez is used by Varkhov, he always has a tryst on Monday (because as we learn from the tape, he has spent the weekend with his wife and is heartily sick of her!). We decide to leave the spool with a tape recorder sitting next to it right on the table in his entrance foyer. An accompanying note will suggest a place and time of meeting. All he has to do for assent is to substitute a blank piece of paper, also provided, in place of the note. All stated in immaculate Russian, thanks to Hjalmar. There is a concept behind this. The House of Love on Feliciano Rodriguez Street (as we now, with a curious mixture of superiority and embarrassment term the theatre of operations for this sticky caper) is always approached and entered by Georgi a half-hour before Zenia. To prevent his chauffeur from getting a glimpse of her, the limousine is always dispatched right back to the Embassy. Then Zenia

arrives by cab and stops a block away. Walks to the door. Georgi, given his advance half hour, is out of his clothes and hungry as a Russian bear. But she delays him. Sometimes, she makes him put on his clothes again. "We must start as equals," she tells him. Fascinating, but the point is that we do have a predictable half hour at the commencement when he is alone.

So, on Thursday, our Company gift is deposited on the foyer table, and Gatsby, who is the least likely to be recognized by either of our Russians, is sitting in a surveillance cab half a block away. Fifteen minutes after Georgi enters the House of Love, he comes out perspiring profoundly and starts to pace the street back and forth. These swings of perambulation become progressively wider until they take him right past Gatsby who is still sitting in the parked taxi. Oh, my God, he recognizes Jay. He stops on the sidewalk, salutes him, sticks his thumb to his nose, waggles his fingers, raises a mallet-like fist, smashes it down on the hood of the taxi hard enough to bestow a sizable dent in the metal, and then, seeing Zenia, strides off to meet her, whereupon they enter the house again. Gatsby, in a perfect perspiration of his own, waits in the taxi and has to haggle with his driver over what the reparation costs of the damaged hood might come to. A half hour later, Zenia, distraught,

leaves with Georgi, and they hail a cab. When Gatsby attempts to follow at the book-approved discreet distance, Georgi, at a red light, has his own vehicle back itself up a full hundred yards to Gatsby's car, gets out, leaves a second dent on the other side of the hood, and jumps back into his cab.

Realizing, I think, that discretion is somewhat pointless by now, Varkhov even drops Zenia on the Rambla one building away from her high-rise, and returns to the Embassy where he pays off the driver and shakes his fist at Jay Gatsby even as the latter drives off.

There's always the chance Varkhov will notify the police that his apartment was entered, but that will take time. So soon as Jay calls in, I'm sent over quickly with Gohogon to see what has been done to Don Bosco's property. It's a nightmare. First of all, Georgi has broken off his key in the front door so we can't get in. Fortunately, there's a rear entrance he has overlooked in his rage, and we also have the key to that. He has done a job. The four-poster bed is smashed, the tape recorder is smashed, the tape, unspooled, is in and out of the toilet bowl and all over the bathroom floor like a slither-pit of tape worms, the living room furniture has hordes of stuffing ripped out, a couple of the walls show dented plaster (from those mallet-like fists)--no need to go on. In the echo, I

feel the fires of the Russian heart burning through the icy Russian winter. I jest, but then I don't. It gives me a glimpse of the terror that Europeans have of the barbaric passions waiting out in the East for them.

Naturally, all hope for a defection is now lost. Hunt, backed by Western Hemisphere Division and the Groogs, is arguing that a defection was never in the cards, and the alternative is to use our Demopos. "Speed is of the essential," he cables, and is given the go-ahead. There is very little to lose. Duplicate tapes are mailed to Masarov at the Embassy, and delivered to the doorman in his high-rise apartment. At a party given by the Swedish Embassy, a third duplicate is left in Masarov's overcoat pocket. Given Ambassador Woodward's injunction that State Department presence at embassy functions be unsullied, none of us have been invited, but Porringer does know the Uruguayan hatcheck girl employed by the Swedes well enough to induce her, by way of half a week's wages, to plant the tape. All of this is at a desperately low level of tradecraft, but, of course, it no longer matters. Saturation is the only way we can be certain Boris receives the goods. No note, of course, is sent. No need for that now. Let Masarov and Varkhov battle it out.

We sit back and wait. Days go by. No apparent results. The Russians are having a reception for Yevgeny Yevtushenko, a young and apparently outspoken new Russian poet. From Headquarters, Soviet Russia Division sends us an INPUT-UPDATE to inform us that Yevtushenko gives readings in Moscow and Leningrad to stadium crowds of as many as 20,000 people. While not a singer, his popularity is still comparable to Elvis Presley. Personnel at the American Embassy are asked to attend the Russian do. Not only Woodward and his stodgy crew, but Hunt, Porringer, Kearns, Gatsby, Hubbard, Waterston and assorted mates are specifically invited. Since it's the heart of winter now, the party is given inside and is formal enough to remind you of Czarist receptions.

Varkhov and Masarov, side by side, head up the receiving line. Zenia is between them. They are all perspiring a little, but then, so are we. Varkhov makes a point of clicking his heels when Jay Gatsby goes by with wife Thelma. I could swear that Masarov winks at me, or was it an involuntary twitch? Zenia, flushed, and looking most vulnerable, as if she is about to weep or to laugh, but can provide no warning, even for herself, of which it will be, is nonetheless looking more beautiful than I have ever seen her. Forgive the crudity of this next thought but it did occur to me that shame bestows a

rich light on a woman's flesh. Exposed, she is also, despite herself, oddly triumphant. Wherever you are, I hope you will not get too furious at this.

At the height of the evening, Yevtushenko was asked to read from his work. He is easily as tall as me, and not bad-looking. Has the sinewy build of a ski instructor. Loudly, he reads his poetry like a young baritone doing a full-voiced recitatif. His Russian seems to be full of onomatopoeic effects. It's hammy acting, but Zenia's eyes gleam like gems. "New spirit of Russian people," she confides to me, as if I were not one of the agents of her attempted downfall. Later, the Belgian Ambassador was to whisper to Hunt that Zenia and Yevtushenko were having an affair.

I wonder. Yevgeny Yevtushenko is quite a fellow. Speaks a harsh English, but practices it assiduously. Draws me aside and wants to know how far I can swim,

"Oh, two miles, anyway," I tell him.

"Can swim ten. In icy water." His eyes are wild and blue and stare at you with peremptory force as if he can bend you to his will inasmuch as his will is pure and only wants your friendship. I have no idea whether he's up to something or to nothing. "Are interested in wedding customs?" he asks.

I shrug.

"Siberian wedding custom fascinating," he says. "Siberian groom pisses glass full of urine. Bride drinks urine. Barbaric, yes?"

"Sounds a bit nyet kulturny."

My use of Russian does not reach him. "Barbaric, yes, but wisdom, yes. Yes, also! Because! What is marriage for poor people? Babies, wet diapers, ca-ca. Stinks. Small stinks. Good wife must live with such. Hence, Siberian custom. Good beginning for marriage."

"It's unfair," I said. "The bridegroom doesn't drink the urine also."

"Agree. I agree. Unfair to women. In your soul, can be said, you show sense of justice for era of tomorrow. Let me shake your hand. I salute you."

He shook my hand, his eyes stared into mine. I had no idea if he was a talented poet, Zenia's new lover, a KGB joy-boy, or, first of all, entirely mad. I did not even know how much he knew of what we had been up to. But he made me feel cheap, that son of a bitch--I don't even know how.

Kittredge, I miss you so much I could cry in my beer, at least, if I were the demonstrative sort, like Yevgeny Yevtushenko.

Love,

Harry

-64-

A few weeks after I sent my last letter to Kittredge, a note arrived at my hotel.

July 20, 1958

Dear Harry,

Just a line to tell you I am back in Georgetown and will be heading up to Maine in a few days. One does plan to write a long letter tomorrow.

Fondly,

Kittredge

This was obviously a signal to visit my post office box. A thick envelope was there. Within, I found about thirty strips of 35mm negative in a separate envelope, and each piece of film contained ten to twelve exposures. Reading the accompanying letter, I was informed soon enough that my correspondence to her, page by page, was now on the enclosed microfilm.

July 20, 1958

Beloved Harry,

As you will discover on putting the negatives into a projector, these are the collected Uruguayan letters of Harry Hubbard. Be a wise dear and put them in some safety deposit box and keep paying the stipend on that small rent forever. It will be worth it. Some day, when you and I are old, the letters might be worth publishing. The impersonal parts, that is.

Harry, I have to confess. You have no idea how close your correspondence came to having no more existence. Being the kind of house it is, one is usually able to find a loose plank

without opening it, and picked up some mimeographed rock-climbing newsletter. A squeak. I thought I was in a suspense film. Another time he spent a weekend with a hammer in his hand going over boards in the house. Thank heavens for my own blessed tendrils. I had touched up the paint on my battered base-board nails just the week before. I couldn't decide whether I anticipated him, or he was reacting to microscopically subtle shifts in the house. It's frightening to live with a man who has the sensory apparatus of a cat. It's also thrilling, and certainly helps to make up for the wretched if most manly (ugh!) smell of Hugh's breath after Courvoisier and Churchills. Smoking a cigar is the most intimate insult a man can offer to a woman. If you ever have a wife and want to lose her, just puff away in her four-poster antique bed on one of those giant tobacco-turds. How transparent are people's vices.

I digress, I see, but then that is my affliction from the job I completed two weeks ago. Yes, it's only two weeks since I've been home, and in another, we return to the Keep where I intend to stay all summer, with or without Hugh. I need the Maine more than my mate at this point.

Now, the first part of this letter has been, I think, to see if I can still clothe myself in the personal presence I

find most agreeable, which is, of course, the Kittredge I've presented to you on a few of the better occasions in writing these letters. And, yes, I can still muster such a persona, but, Harry, I pull it up now more than ever by will. It no longer seems so natural to me. God, I feel five years older than the day you left for South America, and when I try to play with Christopher (who went into an awful slump while I was away, and kept waking up out of such frightful nightmares that I suspect they were in response to what I was going through by day and night thousands of miles away) I find that my little boy looks awfully pale and sort of seedy for a child so young, while I keep looking at him as if he ought to be ten years old, not one and a half, so much do I feel I have aged and turned harsh within.

Now, I mention the pains I took to hide your letters because I had come to the point where (as I will soon explain why) I felt obliged to destroy them. The work I was doing, yes, Dracula's Lair, as you called it, and called it, and called it until I was ready to scream across the distance between us, had taught me one lesson: Things can go wrong! Lord, can serious projects blow up; little on-the-edge stunts that used to produce wicked pleasure, such as hiding your letters in Hugh's domain, had now become chances too fraught in

possible consequences to take on any longer. I had passed as a result of my experience on the Project from believing in good outcomes for the most part to expecting the worst. And the worst, I discovered, lays waste to all that is good in oneself. How innocent I must have kept myself in order to discover this! But I have, and your letters, your beloved letters, which reveal you to be as much of a fool as me, and as innocent, and oh so loving, I adore you for how you love me, gave me the naughtiest sweet warmth all this time, and somehow enabled my marriage to breathe. Carnally considered, I have always had this unholy high passion for Hugh--I don't know any other men, but there can hardly be another so phallic. (He's like the knobs and pistons of the Almighty Engine itself.) All to the good for a piece of frozen New England steel like me, but then there are also his deadening cigars, his glacial powers of concentration on anything but me (until I happen to come around to his attention again.) There, in the middle, however, were your letters, a tender leavening agent. I could betray him just a little and thereby feel loyal to him.

A devil's game. I believe in matrimony, you know. I do think sacraments are taken between God and oneself, and are just as binding as legal contracts in all of the corporate, judicial, industrial world. Contracts can be broken, but not

too many, or society's ills reach critical mass, and we have social breakdown. I think if too many sacraments are broken, humankind and the heavens suffer some kind of cosmic breakdown and God can communicate less with us. So, marriage to me is a holy vow.

What I discovered to my horror was that your letters one by one were making me fall in love with you. Now, I've always loved you, from the moment I saw you in my parents' parlor at the Keep, you were such an angelic presence to me, so malleable. A part of me knew that we could go through life together and find everything interesting as we learned what everything was all about. We were as comfortable with one another as two puppies side by side in a litter. So, yes, I've always loved you, but it never used to count. Naught but a collateral enrichment to my devotion for Hugh.

Over the last couple of years, however, since you have been gone, your letters have stolen into my heart one by one. I have come to dislike you, hate you, feel horrible jealousy, and worst of all, be tormented by a cunning little sense of anticipation which speaks to me of sexual concupiscence, or to put it plain, and I detest this piece of vernacular because it is so accurate and allows no illusions to accompany it, I have had the hots for you, yes, the foul, yearning, rollercoaster

hots of all the gut bemired sentiments of the low body, exactly what used to belong entirely to Hugh. Now, it was being stimulated by you as well. Alpha and Omega had shifted in their agreement, and I knew what it was to be in love with two men. Bad enough if it is Alpha for one and Omega for the other--that is a common human condition. It may even be half-natural (if also the Devil's greatest strength) that all of us, given each our partnership or marriage, good or bad, of Alpha and Omega within, find it all too easy to be in love with one person by way of Omega, and another through Alpha. But I feel as if you have invaded both. My poor Alpha and Omega both are damned for they are both half in love with you. I scream at the ridiculous intellectual postures my damnable jargon and theories do dead-end me in, but there you are--your letters have succeeded in confusing my working balance.

Can I convey how much that means to me? Harry, do you have any conception of how ambitious I am? Do you realize how monumental is Hugh's importance to me, and how the part of me that is not without worldly desire has to respect all the strengths and powers he can and does endow me with? I could never bear living in any inferior role to the higher powers of society. (My father, who is exactly like me, turned into an insufferably pompous pedant about the time he realized that he

rang no loud bell in the grand and vaulted halls.) I may be worse. My mother's buried ambition could be even greater. How, otherwise, did she ever get so dotty?

So, I took on The Project. I cannot tell you more about it than to say it dealt with the manipulation and control of other humans, and the means employed soon became solemn enough, and sticky enough, and finally full of potential TNT for TSS, and the Agency, if it were ever discovered publicly. Indeed, they were so afraid of something going wrong that they decided to try it out in a controlled environment, governmentally speaking. Do you know where? In Paraguay. I was probably less than a thousand miles away. I dreamt of you every night, and lusted for you in an empty bed as much as my womb, yes, would permit such disloyalty to Hugh. How I hated you for searching out the spoor in every low brothel. I know you did that. And once or twice, I almost bought a plane ticket to drop in on you for a weekend. That's how bad it got just a dip or two below the navel. Hugh came to visit once and thought he had a wild woman on his hands.

Anyway, just as you learned by way of Chevi and Libertad and Varkhov and Zenia, what a nasty little vein of crotch-turpitude (yes, I like that) is loose in you, so did I discover how harsh is my secret nature. One person, one of our

subjects, was destroyed in Paraguay, and I, while not the initiator, was the monitor of the accompanying experiments, and I did not feel quite as sick over it as the occasion called for me to be. We live in a great dramatic truss-work of moral syllogisms. To fight the Opponent, we will dare evil ourselves, and I feel as if I have, and did not come back with a compensating good, and so may even have endangered my soul. Indeed, I know I have.

The result shows in curious fashion. I feel ten years older and harsh as hell within. So soon as I came back to Georgetown, I decided, therefore, on certain measures. Since I had bought the bold gamble of accepting a TSS assignment that even a few of my toughest colleagues equivocated away from themselves, and we had then failed in the Paraguayan experiment, why, my career was once again down the hatch. The patina of failure is closer to inhabiting me permanently.

I made, in consequence, two decisions. I saw Allen Dulles and obtained a status of detached duty in order to try to write my proposed major opus on Alpha and Omega. He gave me, somewhat to his relief, I think, his private blessing, and I am off to Maine where I will work all year, and conceivably for years to come. Whatever it takes--which is the expression we used in the field for getting something ugly done.

That was the first decision. For the second, I decided to stop seeing you. I mean, by this, of course, to stop corresponding entirely. Then, much as I wished to keep your letters, I decided it was getting too dangerous. The consequences, if Hugh discovered them, would smash my life. (Since I had been instrumental in smashing at least one South American's life, I felt vulnerable to the frightful costs.) Besides, I was an addict concerning your letters. The only answer, considering all, was cold turkey. I would put your correspondence in an office shredder.

When it came to it, however, I couldn't. Those letters were your offering to me and I realized again how much a hopeless part of me is in love with you. I could not destroy your offering. So I used my office equipment (at which I'm now a practised soul) and microfilmed this record of Harry Hubbard's mind, and heart, and nose, such as it is, for Uruguay and for me, and am sending it to you. I've also just shredded the whole heavy pack, nearly a carton full of your twenty months and more of speaking to me on your dime-store stationery. And felt so dizzy and out of sorts afterward that I did something never done before and went into a bar alone after work, sat down at a cocktail table trembling at such exposure of myself in a public place (still a Radcliffe girl!)

and downed two bourbons neat before I stood up, surprised that no one had accosted me, went home, and explained away the whisky breath by confessing it had been one hell of a day. Christopher cried when I started to kiss him.

There it is. Your lovely Kittredge has become the harsh-voiced Mrs. Montague. Harry, I am serious to the death over this. We are not to communicate with one another, and I will refuse to see you when your tour is over and you come back to Washington. Pray for me to do good work in Maine. How long this separation intends to go on is beyond my intuition. I sense it will be years. Perhaps forever. I would not give you up if I did not love you. Please believe me. I must cling to my sacrament. Under it all, I believe that God still bleeds when we break our vows.

I love you,

Goodbye, dear man

P.S. I was going to ask you to destroy my letters, but on reflection, I can't.

The end of our correspondence came down on me like the death of an intimate. Years later, when my father died, I did not suffer more. Through the months that followed on her last letter, I would open my eyes in the morning with the uneasiness of those bereaved who emerge from sleep without being able to tell themselves what is wrong. They know only that someone is gone. Then memory appears like a hangman at the door.

She had spoken of loving me. That made it worse. Now I could not have mourned her more if she had been my bride. A

pall descended over work. So long as I was writing to Kittredge, this far-off Station where I had been sent to learn my nuts and bolts, had been important to me. It lived, and I lived, in events that were part of the ongoing history of the world. Now, it was merely a far-off Station. Deprived of an audience, I discovered that I was perceiving less. Days went by unilluminated by any interest in what might happen next. My letters to her had brought a little luster to time. Each small event had taken its part in an ongoing scenario. Even events which did no more than deny the validity of the previous hypothesis could stimulate you to find another. Now, with no covert letters to send and receive, operations dwindled to the oft-told story of the working day.

In desperation, I commenced a diary. It was not the same. Speaking to myself, I became matter-of-fact; I gave the diary up.

Attempting to rise out of such torpor, I used accumulated leave to visit Buenos Aires and Rio. I walked for miles through lively cities, and drank in elegant cocktail lounges and at high stand-up plank tables in steamy smoking drinking holes. I travelled like a ghost without fights or encounters. I visited famous brothels. I was for the first time aware of the distaste for men that one could find on the mouths of

whores. When I came back to Montevideo, I went up the coast to Punta Del Este and tried to gamble, but found myself too stingy. Bored, I could not even say for certain that I was bored. I even had a last night with Sally.

Sherman Porringer and Barry Kearns, having finished their tour in Uruguay, were going back to Washington where they would serve respectively, at Near-East Desk and North Asia Desk in preparation for overseas tours in Lebanon and South Korea. There were goodbye parties. At one of the last, four days before departure, Sally Porringer said to me, "I want to visit you."

"In years to come?"

"Tomorrow evening at seven."

She had had her baby, a boy whose resemblance to Sherman was thankfully complete. "Yes," she said, "bygones are bygones and I want to see you. For Auld Lang Syne." She had power over a cliché. So we had a last wall-banger on the bed of my little room. She was still angry, and lay stiffly beside me before we began, but her practical nature won out. She was not a bridge player for too little. Never pass on a playable hand.

In the middle, I discovered myself listening to the sounds we made, and realized that I was comparing them (and somewhat critically) to the climactic duets of Zenia Masarov and Georgi

Varkhov. I even entertained the surrealistic hypothesis that the Soviets were taping Sally and me. That did stimulate my inner life for a day or two. Would the Russians process the tape in time to get it to Sherman before his departure? Would Porringer and I throw a stitch across the wound and stand together in public for a last farewell? We owed it to Masarov and Varkhov who kept demonstrating their ability to work together (since neither had gone back to Moscow.) Was this a reflection of the Russian capacity for suffering, or was it fear of the severe response visited on KGB officers who allowed sentimental upheavals to reach the surface? I present these thoughts to demonstrate the run-down quality of my mind.

After Porringer and Kearns were gone, replacements came in (who deferred to me as a knowledgeable veteran). Then, Howard Hunt had a bereavement. One night when he and Dorothy were at a country club dance in Carrasco, the embassy watch officer telephoned to say that Howard's father had died. Hunt left in the morning for Hamburg, New York, and was a somber fellow on his return. I began to like him. He had his grief and I was living with my sorrow. It was agreeable to sit in one another's company. Each of us could serve as poultice to amputated sentiments in the other. I came to understand Howard a little better. Early one morning when I had driven over to

Carrasco to deliver a couple of economic research papers which I assumed he would pass on to Benito Nardone, he took me out for a walk while breakfast was being prepared. Across the street from his villa was a Catholic lycée. Hunt's three children, dressed in white blouses and wide black floppy bow-ties, accompanied by the Hunt's Argentine governess, were entering the school door. He waved, and said to me, "You have to love a woman a lot to convert to Catholicism at her request." The corners of his mouth turned sour, but then his lips had a natural down-turn when he did not smile. "My father," he said, "was still getting used to the idea of his son as a Catholic when he died." Howard shrugged. "There has got to be a heap of intense feeling out there in America. A little anti-Roman, wouldn't you say?"

"I suppose."

"Do you think it reaches into our domain? That is, concerning decisions on placement?"

"Well, I would hope not," I replied.

He sighed. He was having his troubles with Ambassador Woodward. I never did learn whether Howard's money derived from royalties on his early novels and subsequent wise investments, or was money from Dorothy's side of the marriage, but there was no question. He lived better than the average

Chief of Station. Woodward was now pushing that point up through the State Department and across to the Agency. Hunt entertained too lavishly. His scale of living was too opulent for a man supposed to be no more than First Secretary at the Embassy.

Last year, I would have filled more than one letter to Kittredge with the unexpected turns of such an office game. Inhabiting a depression, however, was not unlike dwelling on the marble floor of an unoccupied bank. Sharp sounds damped into murmurs, echoes told you more than clear speech, light was suffused. I was party to Hunt's side of the trouble, I even felt some hollow equivalent of team spirit, I wanted Station to triumph over State; I had, all the same, so little spiritual property of my own. If I was taking forever to recover, well, Hubbards had hardly been constructed for heartbreak.

At this point, J.C. King, Chief of Western Hemisphere Division, came down on what was announced as a routine inspection, but one hardly saw the legendary J.C. King. He closeted himself with Hunt, then departed. The visit was in response to Woodward's indictment of "peacockish preening unsuitable for government servants."

"How do you defend yourself against that?" I asked.

"I didn't," said Howard, "I attacked. I invoked Nardone."

The Blancos and Ruralistas, combining their parties, had won the national election. For the first time in a hundred years, the Colorados had been defeated. Nardone, like Napoleon, was heading up a Directorate to run Uruguay. So Howard's best point with King turned out to be Woodward's pre-election prediction that the Colorados would triumph. Nardone had been discounted. At a victory party on election night large enough to light up the sky in Montevideo, Hunt was the only American official to be invited from the Embassy. "I explained to King how much Woodward was in Nardone's dog-house. Why, the only way he could even get to meet Benito before inauguration was to ask me to arrange the introduction. Mr. Woodward, of course, has been his own vindictive self toward me ever since. He cannot forgive me for doing him such a large professional favor. I convinced J.C. King of that. 'Fuck Woodward, feed him rice,' he said to me before he left. He didn't even tell me to lower the profile."

Later, by way of the reliable Porringer, I found out that King had built up his own large holdings out on the Panaga River in Paraguay and did not live badly himself. The news pleased me. Cynicism, reducing all values, does diminish one's sense of loss.

In March of 1960, President Eisenhower, on a trip through South America, notified the Embassy that he would stop off in Montevideo. Nardone, immediately informed Hunt that he was going to ask the President of the United States to extend his two-year tour. Nardone wanted Howard with him. Hunt agreed, Hunt was honored, Hunt told me it would never go through. He was obliged, by regulations, to notify Woodward. The Ambassador would object. No President would override his own Ambassador.

It went as Hunt said. Nardone made the request and Eisenhower conferred with Woodward long enough to reply that the Agency had plans to use Mr. Hunt in another place. It may even have been true. Soon after, Hunt was called to Washington. When he came back, he invited me to dinner at his house, and in the study over brandy--no longer did I smoke cigars--he told me of a new project. "Just when you think you're down, it all turns around. You have to believe in your luck. This op is forty times larger than Guatemala."

"Castro? Cuba?"

He nodded. "We're going to make a jumbo move. With Cuban exiles only. Complete Agency participation. Hellaciously covert." He glowed so brightly that the light in the brandy seemed to be radiating off the cheeks of his happy face. "I'm

to work with Cuban leaders in Florida, New York, Mexico if it comes to it, but we'll run it, as of now, from Costa Rica. Before we're done, this one will stock more groceries than any intelligence agency ever put up on the shelf. Yet it's all going to be fabulously sequestered. No overt U.S. involvement. Not one provable piece of evidence to show it's ours." He ran his finger around the rim of the snifter long enough to induce a clear note. "I'll have to resign from the Foreign Service while this is on: Protect appearances. It's going to be a beauty. You know, I started thinking of Hemingway last night. Wasn't it wonderful the way he helped to re-take Paris in World War Two."

"I'll bet."

"Would you like to work as one of my assistants?"

"I can't think of anything I would like more." I said. I meant it. Under twenty wrappings of apathy, I felt a first stirring of desire. I had thought, of course, of where I would go after Uruguay. While I was still writing to Kittredge, I had assumed I would serve under Hugh, but I had not heard from him. Part of my depression might well be due to not knowing where to go. No longer could I see myself in one of Harlot's mills. To live in Washington, and avoid Kittredge? No. I said to Hunt, "I would like to work with you on all of this."

One would have no more need for an hypothesis. Not while shaping a caper as large as the Island of Cuba. Speak of hills like white elephants and the snows of Kilimanjaro, my father would certainly come in on this. How could he not? Yes, the fires of the vow gave promise of blazing in me again.

-66-

Now that I was leaving, my work came alive. There was much to turn over to the new officers. A year ago, I would have found it difficult to say goodbye to AV/ALANCHE 1 through 7, but the gang was larger now and half composed of Peones' cops. Indeed, he virtually ran it out of his office, an important man was Peones now that Nardone was Uruguay's leader.

It was more personal saying goodbye to the others. Nostalgia was proving to be a hardy plant that could grow in thin soil. It actually moved me that I would no longer have

AV/OUCH-1 nor AV/OUCH-2 to oversee with their lists of people who had gone through Passport Control, nor would I have to appease AV/ERAGE, the society journalist, when he had been ignored too long. AV/EMARIA 1, 2, 3 and 4 would not be there to call when I needed a surveillance cab, and poor GOGOL was being shut down. The take at the Russian Embassy was now deemed too small to warrant expenses. The Bosqueverdes would be looking for smaller quarters. Nor could AV/OIRDUPOIS, a.k.a. Gordy Morewood, still phone my desk on Monday morning to haggle over accounts. My replacement would deal with him now. Nor would I get to meet Gordy's mythical AV/ANTGARDE who had worked so high in President Batlle's office that Morewood would reveal his identity to no one. I sometimes suspected that Gordy, having concluded what Uruguayan policy was going to amount to for the next month, merely debriefed the portion of his brain that he called AV/ANTGARDE, a costly fellow.

I even wondered if in some weak hour I might even miss the Sourballs and the Groogs. How odd it might feel not to be talking to an encoder-decoder for half a day. I even had a few sentimental goodbyes to offer the Montevideo brothels. I was fond of several girls; to my surprise, they were fond of me. Show business, I told myself. And was intrigued with the mean vein of the wisecrack. Influence of Porringer, no doubt. But

then it occurred to me that prostitutes and clients were not unlike actors in a play. For the little while that they lived together, it was not unreal.

I had still to say goodbye to AV/OCADO. The night with Libertad had been sufficiently disorienting to give me case-officer's pause. I had done no more for many months than bring out my weekly list of questions, and wine him and dine him at the safe-house. I had even learned how to cook. The days when we argued over whether it was safe to meet in restaurants were done.

His work went on. I do not know if it became less important, or only seemed so in the slog of my long depression, but I began to wonder at the value of all the detailed answers we received about projects undertaken in the Partido Comunista de Uruguay. Was it worth the effort? I hardly knew if I cared and began to question my loss of faith, although not for long. I could not think for long. It used to irritate me that Fuertes, who was heavier by the week until he was in every danger of becoming obese, was also growing more timorous about his safety. He swore that he did not see Libertad any longer, but each visit he worried more about the volume of Peones' rage should he ever discover the facts. "You do not know the man," Chevi insisted. "He is a fascist. Much like Nardone. His

cruelty develops in proportion to his power. Why else be a fascist?"

"We will not let him hurt you."

"You admit that you control Peones?"

"No."

"Then, I am afraid," he said.

I did not know how to reply without admitting the extent of our influence. Chevi answered for me.

"You do control him," he said. "That is why you believe you can protect me. It would be better to draw a circle around my name and inform Peones he is not to enter that area."

"It would be equivalent to telling his office that you are connected to us. Members of the PCU, even if you have not been able to locate them, have penetrated his office."

"You do not need to tell him why you wish to protect me," said Fuertes. "The police are used to providing dispensation in the midst of ambiguity."

"Chevi, I can no longer follow what the hell you are talking about. I think there is something else."

"The solemn fact," said Chevi. "is that Peones knows all about Libertad and me. He found us together."

"With your clothes on?"

"Thankfully. He was ready even so to use his physical capacities, but Libertad commanded him to stop. She said that we were chaste with each other, and she could not love me more if I were her brother. If he ever touched me, she would not see him again. It was a passionate speech, Señor, delivered with volumes of heartfelt feeling. That does not mean Commandante Peones believed her. But in our emotional confrontations, we are people who respect the authority of passion, whether carnal, familial, or the loyalty of friend for dear friend. If we speak from our pride, that establishes the law of the relationship. So Pedro understood that whether her declaration of chastity with me was true or untrue, he would suffer the price."

"Then you have nothing to be afraid of."

"I have everything to fear. He has no need to strike at me directly. His people can."

"Then he will have to face Libertad."

"No. He will disavow any policeman who injures me. He may even punish the man. I assure you, the history will be blurred. Libertad will not give up all the power of her present position if the guilt of Peones prove imprecise. That would be much too expensive."

"Why, imprecise? He would obviously be the instigator."

"Not necessarily. I could be tortured, and Peones might have nothing to do with it. Such torture is commencing, you see. Nardone hates Communists even more than does your J. Edgar Hoover. Ever since Nardone started to travel to the right, twenty-five years ago, personal injuries and wounds of self-esteem have been laid on him by the Communists. So he has an intellectual position equal to a sadistic faith. Nardone believes that the left in this country is a cancer and can only be destroyed through torture. The torturing of Anarchists and Communists has begun."

"By whose authority? By which laws? Tell me of such situations. I don't believe it."

"A policeman can always arrest you. For crossing the street in the wrong place. But once you are arrested, it is now a different drama. Three people high in Party ranks have been cruelly tortured in the last month. Crippled, no, but neither will they feel like fucking their women for a year. The police took possession of their asshole."

"Verdad?"

He began to giggle. Was it because my answer had been sufficiently shocked to come forth in Spanish?

"No, I exaggerate," he said.

"Do you, or don't you?"

He shrugged. "I am now afraid of torture."

We agreed upon the following: If he had any advance warning that he was going to be arrested, he would phone to me. If I was out, the message would contain the word RAINFALL. If there was no time to make a call, his lawyer would contact me. That is, assuming they would allow him to call a lawyer.

Two weeks before I was due to leave Uruguay with Hunt, a man phoned the office late one afternoon with a message for RAINFALL. He would not identify himself, yet stated the hour of Señor Fuertes' arrest, as well as the jail where Señor Fuertes was now incarcerated. Only a policeman could know such facts. If he had called us, it was equivalent to saying that Fuertes had now blown his cover.

I was furious. I was more of a case officer than I had supposed. I did not feel concern for Chevi so much as outrage at the panic he was in. An agent of substance would have accepted the possibility of torture; He could come out a martyr to his colleagues in the Party. His value as an agent would double.

I did not like to think of Alpha and Omega any more. It reminded me of Kittredge. All the same, my next reaction was concern for his safety. I realized I was responding out of another person in myself. The situation might actually be

desperate. Since the loss of Chevi's cover could not be repaired, I might as well ask Howard to accompany me. His presence would accomplish more at the police station than mine.

Hunt was, of course, upset. "Of all the Goddamn fiascos. Our best agent's cover splattered all over Montevideo."

"I know, but it's happened."

"It's personally embarrassing. Archie Norcross is coming in tomorrow. Instead of turning over a nicely-run Station, I've got to fill our new COS in on this."

"I'm sorry."

"We should have alerted Peones on the need to protect AV/OCADO."

"Howard, we couldn't. Cover would have been jeopardized." I was not about to go into the intricacies of any triangle whose vertex was Libertad.

"Well, I'll call Pedro now. One phone call can do it."

Peones, however, was not available. I remembered. It was a Wednesday, an evening when he usually ventured forth with Libertad for a tour of the town.

Howard looked at his watch. "I'm due for a dinner at the country club. We can take care of this in the morning."

"You don't want to wait for morning. A lot of damage could be done to our man's body tonight."

"You think it'll really make a difference if I go down with you to the jail?"

"Howard, they'll see me as a minor official in the State Department. But they will know who you are. It will work."

He threw up his hands. "I'll call Dorothy. What the hell. I lose an hour at most. Tonight is only one more round in the farewell festivities." He pulverized his cigarette. "That dumb fuck, Chevi Fuertes. Calling us in."

"Well, we can at least set an example of how well we take care of our agents."

Police Headquarters was in the Municipal Court Building, which had been put up around the turn of the century as an eight-story commercial edifice for new and expanding business. Now, the shades of failed enterprise lingered in the lobby. The law and the police had taken over, and if eight stories were more than was needed, the rent was doubtless low.

We did not even go by the jail. It was segregated to the rear of the lower floors and in the basement; we were looking for Peones' assistant whose office was six flights up. The elevator, as we soon discovered, was not working.

Since the distance in each story from ceiling to floor was fourteen feet, the stairs were wide and double-banked between each landing. They were also old and dirty. I had time to

contemplate the gloom. What commercial disappointments had collected in these vaulted silences, what dank smells lingered on the courthouse stairs. Cigar butts lay like fallen beetles wherever they had failed to reach the cuspidor.

We were so intent upon conserving our breath in order not to fall short-wind of the other that we actually walked on past the sixth floor to the seventh and were turned down the main corridor before we realized something was wrong. The entire floor was empty. Office doors stood open to rooms void of furniture. Evening light came in through soot-coated, unwashed, ten-foot windows. It was as if we had missed a bend in our life, and were not in a reception hall for those who have gone over to the other side. I had time to wonder if death was like this, a dirty, unoccupied, wasted room.

"Can you believe it?" asked Hunt. "We've gone too far."

Just then, damped by steel, beams of timber, and thick plaster, came cries from the eighth floor. They were much reduced in volume but sounded nonetheless like that unsprung whimper which comes from a dog run over by a car. The sense of loss reverberates to the horizon. Neither Hunt nor I could speak. It was as if we were in someone else's home, and incredible sounds were coming through a bathroom door.

Afterward, after we reached the sixth floor and found Peones' assistant and introduced ourselves, Hunt's name induced sufficient impact on the Deputy to bring him to his feet and into a salute. So our work went quickly. It was fortunate we had come when we did, the Deputy assured us; no activity had yet commenced which might elicit formal embarrassment. (No language can be the equal of Spanish for matters like this.) Señor Eusabio Fuertes would be released in our custody.

"No, in his," said Howard, pointing to me. "I'm late for an engagement."

I walked Howard out to the sixth floor landing.

"Yes," he said, "you were right. I'm glad I came. I must say. . .that torture. . .I have to say it. Those sounds do go all the way in, don't they?"

I waited, in fact, more than an hour for the release, and when I saw Chevi, he was silent and we did not speak until we reached the street. Then he did not cease speaking for the next four hours by which time I had had to promise him the moon. He offered a delineation of his condition: He was in peril and beseiged on both sides--at the mercy of Peones; at the mercy of the PCU. They would be inclined toward revenge. "I am a dead man," he said.

"The PCU would not murder you, would they?" I was, I confess, commencing a report in my mind on "Termination Policies of the PCU."

"They," he said, "will do nothing to me directly. I will be expelled from the Party. Then it is the Tupamarros I must fear. Extremists in the PCU will speak to the Tupamarros concerning my unreliability. That will be equal to termination. There is only one solution. You must get me out of Uruguay."

I spoke of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires. Both were too dangerous, decided Chevi. I offered him the rest of South America, Central America, Mexico. He shook his head. "Too far away."

"Where then?" I asked.

"Miami." He would leave his wife and family. They were too Communist. He would go to Miami alone. We must obtain him work in a decent place. A bank, for example. A man who spoke Spanish, but was not Cuban, could be most useful in dealing with Cubans who were all notoriously unreliable when it came to handling money.

"I will never be able to get you terms as good as that."

"You will. The alternative is too horrible to contemplate. To protect myself, I would have to seek the

public eye. That would be more horrendous for me than for you, but I learned one thing in this jail--I do not wish to die. To underwrite my safety, I would be ready to dive into the hell-hole of publicity."

We obtained false papers, passport, and a visa to America for him in twenty-four hours. He went to work in a Miami bank. One of our proprietaries.

About two years later, six months after the Bay of Pigs, Chevi embezzled a quarter of a million dollars from this bank, flew to Mexico City, and from there to Havana. At present he works, if our information is correct, for Castro's police.

I had come to the end of the microfilm. How many hours it had taken to project my pages frame by frame upon the white wall of my room in the Hotel Metropole was a question I did not yet ask myself--the panic of the last days in New York rushing to finish my account of Uruguay had come back to me now. For that last week in the Bronx, I had travelled back and forth between my room and the microfilm shop, and completed the last

page of manuscript but twenty-four hours before I took the plane.

Now, I lifted my windowshade and looked out on the courtyard. If I could not see the sun, the sky, leaden in hue, looked to be closer to twilight than dawn. My watch, corrected to Moscow time, said six o'clock. Either I had read through the night and it was morning, or I had read through the night and most of the day. No chambermaid had knocked on the door, but then I had put out a sign to be left alone.

Had I slept? I felt no hunger. It seemed to me that I had read and I had slept, read and slept, sitting in my chair, the converted flashlight in my hand, the film strip pushed forward frame by frame. Had I read every page? I did not know that I had to. I knew the book too well. It is possible I had sat there and drowsed, read again, and passed through many a frame without seeing a word.

I had been living in those years of my adolescence and young manhood, however, for close to twenty hours. As I sat at the window looking into the courtyard, the sky above was darkening. Yes, for twenty hours, not eight, I had been at it and the High Holies had not stirred. Yet, I had hardly escaped. I was feeling a full return of that urgency which overran my last weeks in New York; I had no longer felt secure

in my room on the grand Concourse of the Bronx, no, shadows I could not contain were closing in on me. Whether in response to instincts so finely honed that I could respond to surveillance as if a storm were near, or whether I was reacting to nightmares I could not keep behind the barrier of sleep was no inner debate: I had determined, either way, to move on.

Now, I was in the Soviet Union. The rest of my book would survive in my mind. Quickly as I had worked, it had all been too slow. Still unwritten was my memoir of the Bay of Pigs, unwritten was Mongoose under Bill Harvey, and my reconciliation with Harlot, the death of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the war in Vietnam, Watergate, and my marriage to Kittredge. What I knew circled around me like fragments of an explosion which circle as satellites in the obsessional reaches of memory. Sometimes, I knew it could be worse, and the High Holies would return. The pageant would commence.

I was alone, and in Moscow, and the fear that I would lose my life gave me an inkling of the encompassing fear of Chevi Fuertes that I had followed through the last frame of microfilm onto the old white plaster wall of the Metropole, my hulk of a hotel where leading Bolsheviks used to gather in the early years of the Russian Revolution.