

ComCom
Allentown, Pa.

Specifications for Job No. 17680

Parts III and IV—REVISED FIRST PASS

Parts V and VI Afterword and Backmatter—FIRST PASS

Title—HARLOT'S GHOST

Author—Norman Mailer

Publisher—Random House

Date—June 1991

* Indicates revised specification 4/18/91

** Indicates additional revision to specifications 5/13/91

Trim Size—6 1/8" × 9 1/4"

Margins—Head, 1/2"; Gutter, 15/16"

Type page—26 × *45 1/4 picas (includes RH and folio)

*Lines to full text page—39

Lines to chapter opening—20

Par. indent 2 ems

*Text—11/13.5 Baskerville × 26

Figures—Lining

Folios—8 pt. Baskerville Bold lining figures, flush outside at head.

Chapter opening folio—none

Frontmatter folios—roman; arabic pagination begins with first PT as page 1.

Runningheads—8 pt. Baskerville Bold CAPS, flush outside as unit with folio:

18 pts. space between RH and folio; center 1 pt. vertical rule × height of
CAP in space; 1/4" top of RH to top of text.

copy, LEFT: Author; RIGHT: Book Title

Please note: used BM head for left and right.

PARTS open right, backed blank

Part Numbers—**3/16" cap-height Goudy Extra Bold CAPS, center, sink 7
picas from head margin.

Part Ornament—design to supply; center, 18 pts. below PN.

Part Titles—same as PN, **1 pi. space below ornament.

Part Date—5/32" high Goudy bold lining figures, center, 18 pt. space above.
(msp. 863)

CHAPTERS open right following PT with *19 line sink. All others run-in with
10 line space breaks; minimum of 5 text lines above and below chapter
breaks. If run-in chapter falls at top of page, do not set RH or folio; no sink.
Chapter Numbers—1/4" high Goudy Bold lining figures.

Chapter Titles—"Omega ms." (pgs 2-179) Set Omega- Goudy Bold 5/32"
Height, center on CN height, flush left with CN on 26 picas.

Chapter Opening Style—CN flush left, align at base of second text line; 18 pts.
space to text following; center 1 pt. vertical rule, 1/4" high in space.



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Extract—*11/13.5 Baskerville × 26, 1 line space above and below.

Extract 1—*11.5/13.5 Baskerville italic × 26 picas. 2 line space above and 3 line space below, no ornament. Text starts first 3 words small caps. All italic extract begins new page.

Exception: 12/14 Baskerville italic that runs from ms. 180 to 206.

Special Extract—text size, indent 2 pi. left and right, 1 line space above and below; *Heading* centers, no extra space below. (msp. 678?)

Exception: 12/14 within 12/14 extract 1. (insert for omega ms.)

Telegram/Cable—11/13.5 Baskerville small caps, **run-in with text × 26.

**If cable has date/closing lines, indent 2 ems on left, no extra space above or below; *Dateline* sets flush left, no extra space below; *Closing* sets flush right, no extra space above [QUERIED 5/17/91]; cable opens flush left or para indent as it appears on ms. [QUERIED 5/2/91] (msp. 906)

Dialogue—*11/13.5 Baskerville, indent 2 ems on left, turnovers indent 1 em additional; 1 line space above and below.

Spraker: small caps

(*Directions*): italic, 1/2 line space above and below.

Poetry—*11/13.5 Baskerville italic, line for line, flush left on 2 em indent, turnovers indent 1 em additional, 1 line space above and below.

Poem Title: italic, flush left with poem, 1 line space below. (msp. 1160)

Song—same as poetry, but roman.

Letter—*11/13.5 Baskerville × 26, 2 line space above and below. (mspp. 862 & 863)

Datelines & *Closings*: align on left, flush right as a unit on 26 pi., no extra space above or below. *Dateline* on *Chapter Opening* starts new line following CN in normal position. (msp. 863) [QUERIED 5/2/91] *Dateline* *within* *Letter* sets flush right, 1 line space above, no extra space below. (msp. 934)

Greeting: new line flush left, no extra space above or below.

Body: justified × 26 pi., opens with para indent.

Postscript: P.S. or P.P.S. in small caps, text following does not have a hanging indent, (per master set pg. 547) 1 line space above. (msp. 874)

Dialogue (msp. 925); *Cable* (msp. 1043) [QUERIED 5/2/91]; and *Poem* (msp. 1160): same as in text.

Message: 11/13.5 Baskerville, indent 2 ems on left, 1 line space above and below. (msp. 1187)

Multi-column List: 11/13.5 Baskerville CAPS, indent 2 ems on left, 1 line space above and below; entries align on left, 2 pi. space between columns (adjusted as necessary to fit line for line). (msp. 1011)

Long note: (ms. 1696-1699) 11/13.5, indent ems, gave 1 line above and below please confirm

Computer printout: (ms. 1524-1526) Boldface, indent 2 ems × 20 picas, 1 line space above and below. Do not break any words. Set justified, please confirm

Miscellaneous extracts: followed ms. markings.

BACKMATTER

BM Head—catchlines set

BM text—9/10 × 26 picas justified, runovers for biblio indent 1 em and begins

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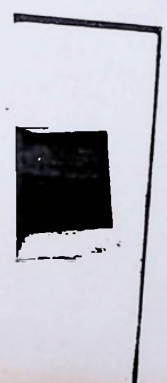
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1 line space below Author's Note text. Runovers for Characters, Organizations, Cryptonyms, and Cover Names-Places-Foreign Phrases indent 2 ems. 1 line space between alpha breaks.

Note: Galleys will not be vertically justified, in order to show proper spacing around elements.

This title was composed on ComCom's computer driven composition device.

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ALSO BY NORMAN MAILER:

THE NAKED AND THE DEAD
BARBARY SHORE
THE DEER PARK

ADVERTISEMENTS FOR MYSELF

DEATHS FOR THE LADIES (AND OTHER DISASTERS)

THE PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS
AN AMERICAN DREAM

CANNIBALS AND CHRISTIANS

WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?

THE ARMIES OF THE NIGHT

MIAMI AND THE SIEGE OF CHICAGO

OF A FIRE ON THE MOON

THE PRISONER OF SEX

EXISTENTIAL ERRANDS

ST. GEORGE AND THE GODFATHER

MARILYN

THE FIGHT

GENIUS AND LUST

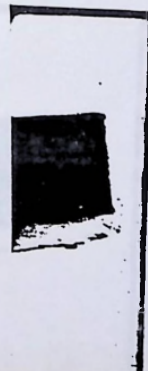
THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG

OF WOMEN AND THEIR ELEGANCE

PIECES AND PONTIFICATIONS

ANCIENT EVENINGS

TOUGH GUYS DON'T DANCE



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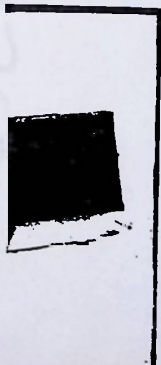
HARLOT'S GHOST

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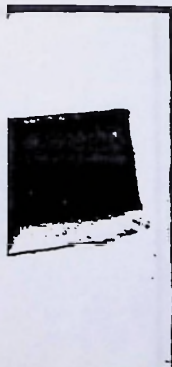
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HARLOT'S GHOST

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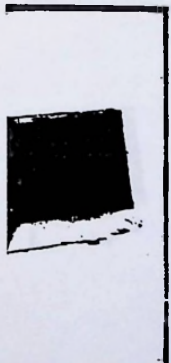
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First Edition



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TO JASON EPSTEIN



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OMEGA-1

On a late-winter evening in 1983, while driving through fog along the Maine coast, recollections of old campfires began to drift into the March mist, and I thought of the Abnaki Indians of the Algonquin tribe who dwelt near Bangor a thousand years ago.

In the spring, after the planting of corn, the younger braves and squaws would leave the aged to watch over the crops and the children, and would take their birchbark canoes south for the summer. Down the Penobscot River they would travel to Blue Hill Bay on the western side of Mount Desert where my family's house, built in part by my great-great-grandfather, Doane Hadlock Hubbard, still stands. It is called the Keep, and I do not know of all else it keeps, but some Indians came ashore to build lean-tos each summer, and a few of their graves are among us, although I do not believe they came to our island to die. Lazing in the rare joys of northern warmth, they must have shucked clams on the flats at low tide and fought and fornicated among the spruce and hemlock when the water was up. What they got drunk on I do not know, unless it was the musk of each other, but many a rocky beach in the first hollow behind the





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shore sports mounds of ancient clam shells, ground to powder by the centuries, a beach behind the beach to speak of ancient summer frolics. The ghosts of these Indians may no longer pass through our woods, but something of their old sorrows and pleasures joins the air. Mount Desert is more luminous than the rest of Maine.

Even guidebooks for tourists seek to describe this virtue: "The island of Mount Desert, fifteen miles in diameter, rises like a fabled city from the sea. The natives call it Acadia, beautiful and awesome."

Beautiful and awesome. We have a fjord in the middle of Mount Desert, a spectacular four-mile passage by water between promontories on either side. It is the only true fjord on the Atlantic coast of North America, yet it is but a part of our rock-hewn splendor. Near the shore, peaks rise abruptly a thousand feet to afford sailing craft the illusion of great mountains, and our finest anchorage, Northeast Harbor, is in summer a dazzle of yachts.

Perhaps it is the nearness of our mountains to the sea, but silences are massive here, and summers have an allure not simple to describe. For one thing, we are not an island to attract people who follow the sun. We have almost no sand beach. The shore is pebble and clam-shell strand, and twelve-foot tides inundate the rocks. Washed by incoming waves are barnacles and periwinkles, rockweed mussels, Irish moss, red seaweed, dulse. Sand dollars and whelks lie scattered in the throw of the surf. Kelp is everywhere and devil's-apron often winds around one's ankles. In the tide pools grow anemone and sponge. Starfish and sea urchins are near your toes. One walks with care over sharp stones. And the water is so cold that swimmers who did not spend childhood vacations in this icy sea can hardly bear it. I have lolled in the wild green above the reefs of the Caribbean and sailed over purple deeps in the Mediterranean, I have seen the inimitable mist of hot summer on the Chesapeake when all hues blend between the sky and the bay. I even like slate-brown rivers that rush through canyons in the West, but I love the piercing blue of Frenchman's Bay and Blue Hill Bay, and the bottomless blue of the Eastern and Western Way surrounding Mount Desert—indeed, one's affection for the island even





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shares the local accent. As decreed by the natives, one spells it Mount Desert, but the pronunciation is Mount Dessert. The view is as fine as sugar frosting to a New Englander's eyes.

I speak in hyperbole, but then who cannot on recalling such summer beauties as the astonishing color of our rocks at water's edge. They are apricot, then lavender, and pale green, yet in late afternoon they become purple over the whole, a dark royal violet is the color of the twilight shore seen from the sea. That is our island in August. Beach heather and wild rose grow near the salt marsh grass, and in our meadows white-throated sparrows spring from one decaying stump to another. The old hayfields smell of redbud and timothy, and wildflowers bloom. The northern blue violet and the starflower, the wood sorrel and the checkerberry, painted trillium and wild geranium, golden heather and Indian pipe grow in our bogs and fields and on the sunny slopes of our mountains in the seams between ledges of rock. Down by the marshes are swamp candles and jewelweed. Once, when I was a boy (for I studied the names of wildflowers then) I found the white-vein orchid in some swampy woods; it was greenish-white, and lovely, and as rare as the moon entering eclipse. For all its tourist traffic come July, Mount Desert is still possessed of a tender yet monumental silence.

If one would ask how the monumental can ever be tender, I reply that such words recall us to the beautiful and awesome. So am I tempted, when caution deserts me, to describe my wife, Kittredge. Her white skin becomes luminous in any pale meadow; it also reflects the shadows of the rock. I see Kittredge sitting in such shadows on a summer day, and her eyes have the blue of the sea.

I have also been with her when she can seem as bleak as the March storms that strike this island. Now, in March, the fields are dun, and the snow, half-gone, will be stained in the morning with the stirring of the mud. In March, the afternoons are not golden but gray, and the rocks are rarely burnished by the sun. Certain precipices become as grim as the endless meditations of granite. At winter's end, Mount Desert is like a miser's fist; the dull shell of the sky meets a leaden sea. Depression sits over the hills. When my wife is depressed, no color stirs in my own heart, and her skin is not luminous but hooded in pallor. Except for



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snowy days, when island lights still dance off the frozen rock like candles on a high white cake, I do not like to live in late winter on Mount Desert. The sunless sky weighs over us, and a week can go by when we do not speak. That is loneliness kin to the despair of a convivial drinker who has not poured a glass for days. It is then that ghosts begin to visit the Keep. Our fine dwelling is hospitable to ghosts.

The house sits alone on an island, not ten acres of spread, just a stone's throw—literally one long throw—off the western shore of Mount Desert. Called Doane, after my great-great-grandfather, it is subject, I suspect, to visitations. While islands, according to my wife, are supposed to be more acceptable to invisible spirits than to such peculiarly apparent manifests as ghosts, I think we break the rule.

Out on Bartlett's Island, somewhat to the north of us, is the all-but-certified ghost of Snowman Dyer, an eccentric old fisherman. He died on Bartlett's in 1870 under the roof of his spinster sister. Once, as a young man, he had bartered five lobsters for a small Greek tome that belonged to a classics scholar at Harvard. The work was the *Oedipus Rex* and it had an interlinear trot. The old fisherman, Snowman Dyer, was intrigued so much by Sophocles' words in literal translation that he attempted to read the original Greek. Not knowing how to pronounce the alphabet, he contrived nonetheless a sound for each character. As he grew older, he grew bolder, and used to recite aloud from this unique tongue while wandering over the rocks. They say that to spend a night in the dead sister's house will bring Snowman Dyer's version of Greek to your ear, and the sounds are no more barbaric than the claps and groans of our weather. A corporate executive from Philadelphia, Bingham Baker, and his family now inhabit the house and seem to thrive on the ghost—at least, all the Bakers look pink-cheeked in church. I do not know if they hear the moan of winter in Snowman Dyer's voice.

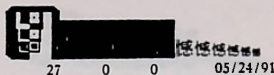
Old Snowman may be the ghost of Bartlett's Island, but we have another on Doane, and he is not so agreeable. A sea captain named Augustus Farr, he owned and occupied our land two and a half centuries ago. There are allusions to his habits in an old sea-diary I have found in the library at Bar Harbor, and one

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voyage is cited "during which Farr engaged in practice of piracy" and boarded a French frigate in the Caribbean, took its cargo of Cuban sugar, put the crew to sea in an open boat (except for those who would join him), and beheaded the commodore, who died in naked state because Farr had appropriated his uniform. Then Augustus was so bold in later years as to have himself buried on his northern island—now our island—in the Frenchman's dress apparel.

I have never seen Augustus Farr, but I may have heard his voice. One night, not long ago, when alone in the Keep, I came out of a dream to find myself conversing with the wall. "No, leave," I said boldly, "I do not know if you can make amends. Nor do I trust you." When I recall this dream—if it was a dream—I shiver in a way I cannot repeat at other times. My flesh shifts on my back as if I am wearing a jacket of lizard skin. I hear my own voice again. I am not speaking to the plaster in front of me but to a room I feel able to see on the other side of the wall. There, I visualize a presence in a tattered uniform sitting on an oaken and much-scarred captain's chair. An odor of corruption is in my nose. Out on the mud flats, or so I hear through the window—I do not dare to look—the sea is boiling. How can waters boil when the tide is out? I am still in my dream but watch a mouse streak along the floor, and feel the ghost of Augustus Farr on the other side of the wall. The hair stiffens on the back of my head as he descends the stairs to the cellar. I hear him going down to the Vault.

Underneath the cellar, was originally a dugout built by my father after the Second World War when he still owned the Keep. He prided himself on being the first American to take in the consequences of Hiroshima. "Everybody needs a place where he can get under it all," said my father, Cal Hubbard, two years before he sold our property to his second cousin, Kittredge's father, Rodman Knowles Gardiner, who in turn gave it over to Kittredge on her first marriage. In the time Rodman Gardiner had it, however, he decided to go my father one further and was the first man, so far as I know, in this part of Maine to have a cinder-block fallout shelter complete with canned goods, bunks, kitchen, ventilation fans, and at the entrance, two corridors set at right angles to one another. What that ninety-



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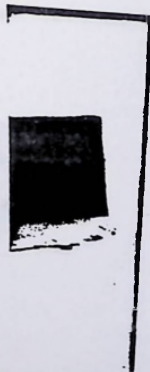
degree turn has to do with keeping off nuclear radiation I cannot say, but there were curious fashions in early fallout shelters. It is still there for us; a family embarrassment. Up in Maine you are not supposed to protect your life that much.

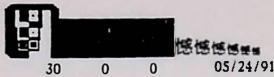
I despised the shelter. I let it molder. The foam rubber of the bunk mattresses has gone to powder. The stone floor is covered with nothing less than an old slime. The electric light bulbs, long burned out, are corroded in their sockets.

Let this not give too false an idea of the Keep. The floor of the Vault—so the fallout shelter came inevitably to be named—is ten feet below the main cellar, which is, itself, a large, clean, stone chamber. The main floor and second story and full attic of the Keep are kept in reasonable order by a Maine woman who comes in every day the weather permits when we are there, and once a week when we are gone. It is only the Vault that is left untended. That is my fault. I cannot bear to let anyone go down to it. If I open the door, a mad dank odor comes up from below. It is no rarity for subcellars to be dank, but the odor of madness is another matter.

On the night when I emerged from my dream to encounter Augustus Farr, on that night when I became convinced I was not dreaming and heard him descending the stairs, I got up from bed and attempted to follow. This was not an act of bravery so much as endless conditioning in the special art of converting one's worst fears to fortitude. My father told me once when I was an adolescent, "If you are afraid, don't hesitate. Get right into the trouble if that is the honest course." It was a hypothesis on the art of courage that I had to refine considerably in bureaucratic wars where patience was the card to play, but I knew when fear proved paralyzing that one had sometimes to force a move or let one's soul pay up. The honest course on encountering a ghost was clear: Follow him.

I tried. My feet as cold as a winter corpse, I started down the stairs. That was no dream. In front of me, doors slammed in a fury. "I will not return until I do," I thought I heard a voice cry. By the time I descended to the first cellar, my resolve had run out. At the entrance to the Vault a presence as malevolent as any dark creature of the sea seemed to be waiting below. My courage was now not large enough to take my legs down the last





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ten steps. I stood there unmoving, as if some part of honor would be safeguarded if I did not flee, but stood in place to accept the wrath of whatever it was. I will say it. I lived in the intangible embrace of that malevolence. Then, Augustus—I assume it was Augustus—withdrew into the depths of the Vault and I felt free to retreat. I went back to my bed. I slept as if drugged by the most powerful of tranquilizers. Since that time I have not gone to the Vault nor has Augustus come to me.

Nonetheless, the Keep was altered by his visitation. Possessions get broken now at an alarming rate, and I have seen ashtrays slide off tables. It is never so dramatic as in the films. Rather, it is sly. You cannot say to a certainty that your coat sleeve did not brush the object nor that the old floor does not have a tilt. It could all have happened through natural causes, or just about. Dealing with such phenomena is like trying to ascertain the facts when talking to a consummate liar. Things keep turning into other things. The wind outside our windows seemed quicker than ever to show its cardinal points: sinister, or saintly, soft or shocking. I never listened to the wind so much as after the visit of Augustus Farr, and the sound of oars would come to me although no boatman was visible. Still, I could hear oarlocks groaning, and bells rang out from chapels on the main island where, so far as I knew, no towers stood to hold the bells. I would listen to the gate swinging in a high wind and plaster falling behind the laths. Small beetles with shells as hard as 12-gauge shot came out of the sills. Every time I went through my books in the library, I could swear a few had moved, but of course the cleaning woman often passed through, or Kittredge, or even myself. No matter. Like a chill pool in a warm hall, Farr was about.

Yet, for all this, the Keep was not spoiled. A ghostly presence is not always dire. Kittredge and I, being childless, had space to let in so large a house. Farr was a mighty diversion, not unequal to living with a drunk or a crazy brother. If he remains as a phantom I cannot swear I have seen, still I would speak of ghosts as real. Some ghosts may be real.



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EMBARKING A YEAR later, in March of 1984, on a overnight flight from Kennedy, New York, to London, with a connection to Sheremetyevo Airport, Moscow, I kept reading and rereading the dozen pages of typescript that described my former home on Doane Island in Maine. I did not dare to cease. I was in a state of anxiety that gave promise of growing unmanageable. Those dozen pages were the first chapter of what I had come to call the Omega manuscript. I had another, an Alpha manuscript, which once took up twelve inches in a locked file cabinet next to my desk at the Keep, a work that could boast of more than two thousand typewritten pages, but it was formidably indiscreet, and so I had committed its bulk to microfilm, and consigned the original sheets to a shredder. The Alpha manuscript was with me now, all two thousand frames of microfilm on two hundred strips of ten frames each which, laid by sets into glassine sleeves, were packed snugly within an eight-by-eleven-inch manila envelope. I had concealed this slim, even elegant package, not a quarter of an inch thick, in a recess of a special piece of luggage I had owned for years, said medium-size suitcase now riding in the cargo hold of the British Airways plane that was taking me on the first leg, New York to London, of my flight to Moscow. I would not see it until I was ready to unpack the bag in Russia.

My other manuscript, however, the Omega, a moderate one hundred and eighty pages, so recently written that I had not converted it to microfilm, still existed as typescript in the attaché case beneath my seat. If I had spent the first hundred minutes of this trip in limbo, which is to say, there in the middle of Economy, dreading my arrival in London, my change of planes, and, most certainly, my eventual terminus in Moscow, I felt unable to explain to myself why I had embarked in the first place. Like an insect rendered immobile by a whiff of poison spray, I sat in my chair tilted back all three inches of rearward slant available to the Economy tourist and read the first fourteen pages of the Omega manuscript one more time. I was in that half-stupor where one's legs are too massive to move. All the while, nerves jumped like light-up buttons in an electronic game. Nausea was my neighbor.

Due for arrival in London in another few hours, I felt obliged to read the rest of Omega, all of one hundred and sixty-six pages of typescript, after which I would tear up the sheets and flush away as many of them as the limited means of the British Airways crapper on



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this aircraft would be able to gulp into itself, then save the rest for the sturdier gullets in the men's room attached to the Transit Lounge at Heathrow. Visualizing the whirl of these shreds and strips of paper revolving into the hound's gurgle of a near-to-choking bowl came close to carrying me off on the good ship vertigo.

My anxiety was from pain of loss. I had spent my last year working on Omega. It was all I had to show for a twelve-month of inner turmoil. If I had reread Omega a hundred times during the months of advancing its chapters, page by slow and daily page, I would now be reading such work for a last time. I was saying good-bye to a manuscript which, in the past year, had accompanied me through hints and recollections of some of the worst episodes of my life. Soon, in but a few hours more, I would have to dispose of the contents, yes, paragraph ripped through the middle after paragraph, these pages, drawn and quartered, flushed into sewer pipes. If I dared not to get drunk, I did order a Scotch from the stewardess, and swallowed it at a gulp while offering a toast to the last of Omega.

EXTRACT 1 ORNAMENTS HAVE BEEN DELETED





12

OMEGA-2 | On that moonless night in March, returning to the Keep, I took the road from Bath to Belfast, the road that goes by Camden. In every cove was fog and it covered one's vision like a winding sheet, a fog to embrace the long rock shelf offshore where sailing ships used to founder. When I could no longer see anything at all, I would pull the car over; then the grinding of the buoys would sound as mournful as the lowing of cattle in a rain-drenched field. The silence of the mist would come down on me. You could hear the groan of a drowning sailor in the lapping of that silence. I think you had to be demented to take the coast road on such a night.

Past Camden, a wind sprang up, the fog departed, and soon the driving was worse. With this shift in the weather, a cold rain came. On some curves the highway had turned to ice. Going into skids, my tires sang like a choir in a country church surrounded by forest demons. Now and then would appear a shuttered town and each occasional street light would seem equal to a beacon at sea. Empty summer houses, immanent as a row of tombs, stood in witness.

I was full of bad conscience. The road had become a lie. It would offer traction, then turn to glass. Driving that car by the touch of my fingertips, I began to think once more that lying was an art, and fine lying had to be a fine art. The finest liar in the land must be the ice monarch who sat in dominion on the curve of the road.

My mistress was behind me in Bath, and my wife awaited me near the island of Mount Desert. The ice monarch had installed his agents in my heart. I will spare you the story I told Kittredge about small transactions that would occupy me in Portland until evening and so cause my late return to Mount Desert. No, my business had been done in Bath, and in the merry arms of one of the wives of Bath. By acceptable measure, she did not have much to offer against my mate. The woman in Bath was agreeable, whereas my dear wife was a beauty. Chloe was cheerful, and Kittredge was—I apologize for so self-serving a word—distinguished. You see, Kittredge and I, while only third cousins, look much alike—even our noses are similar. Whereas Chloe is as common as gravy and heartening to taste. Buxom and bountiful,





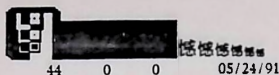
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she worked in summer as a waitress in a Yankee inn. (Let us say: a Yankee-inn-type restaurant run by a Greek.) One night a week, on the hostess's night off, Chloe was proud to serve as *pro tem* hostess. I helped her funds a bit. Perhaps other men did, too. I hardly knew. I hardly cared. She was like a dish I was ready to consume once or twice a month. I do not know if it would have been three times and more a week if she lived just over the hill, but Bath was considerably more than a hundred miles from the back side (our word for the back shore) of Mount Desert, and so I saw her when I could.

A liaison with a mistress that is kept so infrequently tends, I think, to serve civilization. If it had been any marriage but my own, I would have remarked that a double life lived with such moderation ought to be excellent—it might make both halves more interesting. One could remain deeply, if not wholly, in love with one's wife. My occupation offered wisdom on such matters, after all. Did we begin by speaking of ghosts? My father commenced a family line that I continue: Spooks. In Intelligence, we look to discover the compartmentalization of the heart. We made an in-depth psychological study once in the CIA and learned to our dismay (it was really horror!) that one-third of the men and women who could pass our security clearance were divided enough—handled properly—to be turned into agents of a foreign power. "Potential defectors are at least as plentiful as potential alcoholics," was the cheerful rule of thumb we ended with on that one.

After so many years of work with imperfect people I had learned, therefore, to live a little with the lapses of others so long as they did not endanger too much. Yet my own defection from the marital absolute left me ill with fear. On this night of blind driving to which I have introduced you, I was half certain I would soon be in a wreck. I felt caught in invisible and monstrous negotiations. It seemed—suspend all logic—that dreadful things might happen to others if I stayed alive. Can you understand? I do not pretend: I think something of the logic of the suicide is in such thoughts. Kittredge, who has a fine mind, full of *apercus*, once remarked that suicide might be better understood on the assumption there was not one reason for the act but two: People may kill themselves for the obvious reason, that





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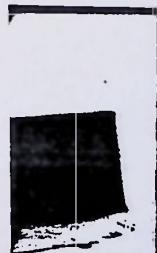
they are washed up, spiritually humiliated down to zero; equally, they can see their suicide as an honorable termination of deep-seated terror. Some people, said Kittredge, become so mired in evil spirits, that they believe they can destroy whole armies of malignity by their own demise. It is like burning a barn to wipe out the termites who might otherwise infest the house.

Say much the same for murder. An abominable act which, nonetheless, can be patriotic. Kittredge and I did not talk long about murder. It was a family embarrassment. My father and I once spent close to three years trying to assassinate Fidel Castro.

Let me return, however, to that icy road. There, if my sense of preservation kept a light touch on the wheel, my conscience was ready to crush it. I had shattered more than a marriage vow. I had broken a lovers' vow. Kittredge and I were fabulous lovers, by which I do not intend anything so vigorous as banging away till the dogs howl. No, back to the root of the word. We were *fabulous* lovers. Our marriage was the conclusion to one of those stern myths that instruct us in tragedy. If I sound like the wind of an ass in whistling about myself on such a high note, it is because I feel uneasy at describing our love. Normally, I cannot refer to it. Happiness and absolute sorrow flow from a common wound.

I will give the facts. They are brutal, but better than sentimental obfuscation. Kittredge had had but two men in her life. Her first husband and myself. We began our affair while she was still married to him. Some time after she betrayed him—and he was the kind of man who would think in terms of betrayal—he took a terrible fall in a rock climb and broke his back. He had been the lead, and when he went, the youth who was belaying him from the ledge below was pulled along. The anchor jerked out of the rock. Christopher, the adolescent killed in the fall, was their only child.

Kittredge could never forgive her husband. Their son was sixteen and not especially well coordinated. He should not have been led to that particular rock face. But then, how could she forgive herself? Our affair sat over her head. She buried Christopher and watched over her husband during the fifteen weeks he was in the hospital. Soon after he came home, Kittredge chose



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to get into a warm bath one night and cut each of her wrists with a sharp kitchen blade, after which she lay back and prepared to bleed to death in her tub. But she was saved.

By me. She had allowed no communication since the day of the fall. News so terrible had divided the ground between us like a fissure in earth that leaves two neighboring homes a gaping mile apart. God might as well have spoken. She told me not to see her. I did not try. On the night, however, that she took the knife to her wrists, I had (on a mounting sense of unease) flown up from Washington to Boston, then to Bangor, and rented a car to go on to Mount Desert. I heard her calling to me from caverns so deep in herself she was never aware of her own voice. I arrived at a silent house and let myself in through a window. Back on the first floor was an invalid and his nurse; on the second, his wife, presumably asleep in a far-off bed. When her bathroom door was locked and she did not reply, I broke in. Ten minutes more would have been too late.

We went back to our affair. Now there was no question. Shocked by tragedy, certified by loss, and offered dignity by thoughts we could send to one another, we were profoundly in love.

The Mormons believe that you enter into marriage not only for this life but, if you are married in the Temple, will spend eternity with your mate. I am no Mormon, but even by their elevated measure, we were in love. I could not conceive that I would ever be bored in my wife's presence either side of the grave. Time spent with Kittredge would live forever; other people impinged upon us as if they entered our room holding a clock in their hand.

We had not begun in so inspired a place. Before the disaster on the rock face, we were taken with each other enormously. Since we were third cousins kissing, the tincture of incest enriched the bliss. But it was—on the highest level—qualified stuff. We were not quite ready to die for one another, just off on an awfully wicked streak. Her husband, Hugh Montague—"Harlot"—took on more importance, after all, in my psyche than my own poor ego. He had been my mentor, my godfather, my surrogate father, and my boss. I was then thirty-nine years old and felt half that age in his presence. Cohabiting with his wife,



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I was like a hermit crab who had just moved into a more impressive carapace; one was waiting to be dislodged.

Naturally, like any new lover in so momentous an affair, I did not ask for her motive. It was enough that she had wanted me. But now, after twelve years with Kittredge, ten in marriage, I can give a reason. To be married to a good woman is to live with tender surprise. I love Kittredge for her beauty and—I will say it—her profundity. We know there is more depth to her thought than to mine. All the same, I am frequently disconcerted by some astonishing space in the fine workings of her mind. Attribute it to background. She has not had a career like other women. I do not know many Radcliffe graduates who went into the CIA.

Item: On the night twelve years ago when we first made love, I performed that simple act of homage with one's lips and tongue that a good many of our college graduates are ready to offer in the course of the act. Kittredge, feeling some wholly unaccustomed set of sensations in the arch from thigh to thigh, said, "Oh. I've been waiting years for that!" She soon made a point of telling me I was the next thing to pagan perfection. "You're devil's heaven," she said. (Give me Scotch blood every time!) She looked no older on our first night than twenty-seven, but had been married already for eighteen and a half of her forty-one years. Hugh Tremont Montague was, she told me (and who could not believe her?) the only man she had ever known. Harlot was, also, seventeen years her senior, and very high echelon. Since one of his skills had been to work with the most special double agents, he had developed a finer sense of other people's lies than they could ever have of his. By now he trusted no one, and, of course, no one around him could ever be certain Harlot was telling the truth. Kittredge would complain to me in those bygone days that she couldn't say if he were a paragon of fidelity, a gorgon of infidelity, or a closet pederast. I think she began her affair with me (if we are to choose the bad motive rather than the good) because she wanted to learn whether she could run an operation under his nose and get away with it.

The good motive came later. Her love deepened for me not because I saved her life but because I had been sensitive to the mortal desperation of her spirit. I am finally wise enough to



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know that that is enough for almost all of us. Our affair commenced again. This time, we made an absolute of love. She was the kind of woman who could not conceive of continuing in such a state without marriage. Love was a state of grace and had to be protected by sacramental walls.

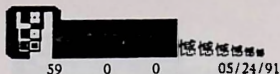
She felt obliged, therefore, to tell her husband. We went to Hugh Tremont Montague and he agreed to divorce. That may have been the poorest hour of my life. I was afraid of Harlot. I had the well-founded dread one feels for a man who can arrange for the termination of people. Before the accident, when he was tall and thin and seemed put together of the best tack and gear, he always carried himself as if he had sanction. Someone on high had done the anointing.

Now, stove-in at the waist, conforming to the shape of the wheelchair, he still had sanction. That was not the worst of it, however. I may have been afraid of him, but I also revered him. He had not only been my boss, but my master in the only spiritual art that American men and boys respect—machismo. He gave life courses in grace under pressure. The hour that Kittredge and I spent together on either side of his wheelchair is a bruise on the flesh of memory. I remember that he cried before we were done.

I could not believe it. Kittredge told me later it was the only time she ever saw him weep. Hugh's shoulders racked, his diaphragm heaved, his spavined legs remained motionless. He was a cripple stripped down to his sorrow. I never lost the image. If I compare this abominable memory to a bruise, I would add that it did not fade. It grew darker. We were sentenced to maintain a great love.

Kittredge had faith. To believe in the existence of the absurd was, for her, a pure subscription to the devil. We were here to be judged. So our marriage would be measured by the heights it could climb from the dungeon of its low beginnings. I subscribed to her faith. For us, it was the only set of beliefs possible.

How, then, could I have spent my most recent hours this gray March day slopping and sliding on the over-friendly breast and belly of Chloe? My mistress's kisses were like taffy, soft and sticky, endlessly wet. From high school on, Chloe had doubtless been making love with her mouth to both ends of her friends.



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Her groove was a marrow of good grease, her eyes luminous only when libidinal. So soon as we subsided for a bit, she would talk away in the happiest voice about whatever came into her head. Her discourse was all of trailer homes (she lived in one), how ready they were to go up in flames, and of truckers with big rigs who ordered coffee while sitting on enough self-importance to run the Teamsters. She told anecdotes about old boyfriends she ran into at the town lunch counter. " 'Boy,' I said to myself, 'has he been shoveling it in! Fat!' Then I had to ask myself: 'Chloe, is your butt that far behind?' I put the blame on Bath. There's nothing to do here in winter except eat, and look for hungry guys like you," at which she gave a friendly clap to my buttocks as if we were playing on a team together—the old smalltown sense that you heft a person's worth—and we were off again. There was one yearning in my flesh (for the common people) that she kept at trigger-trip. Skid and slide and sing in unison, while the forest demons yowl.

I had met her in the off-season in the big restaurant where she worked. It was a quiet night, and I was not only alone at my table but the only diner in my section. She waited on me with a quiet friendliness, much at home with the notion that a meal which tasted right for me was better wages for her than a meal that tasted wrong. Like other good materialistic people before her, she was also maternalistic: she saw money as coming in all kinds of emotional flavors. It took happy money to buy a dependable appliance.

When I ordered the shrimp cocktail, she shook her head. "You don't want the shrimp," she said. "They've died and risen three times. Take the chowder." I did. She guided me through the meal. She wanted my drinks to be right. She did it all with no great fuss—I was free to stay in my private thoughts, she in hers. We talked with whatever surplus was in our moods. Perhaps one waitress in ten could enjoy a lonely customer as much as Chloe. I realized after a while that on pick-up acquaintance, which was never my style, I was surprisingly comfortable with her.

I stopped off again at the restaurant on another quiet night and she sat and had dessert and coffee with me. I learned of her life. She had two sons, twenty and twenty-one; they dwelt in





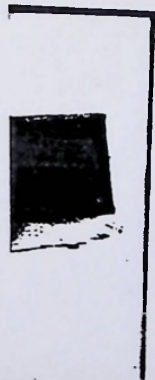
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Manchester, New Hampshire, and worked in the mills. She claimed to be thirty-eight and her husband had broken up with her five years ago. Caught her cheating. "He was right. I was a boozier then, and you can't trust a boozier. My heels were as round as roller skates." She laughed with enough good humor to have been watching her own pornographic romp.

We went to her trailer. I have an ability developed, I believe, by my profession. I can concentrate on what is before me. Interoffice flaps, bureaucratic infringements, security leaks, even such assaults on the unconscious as my first infidelity to Kittredge, can be ignored. I have a personal instrument I think of as average, a good soldier, a dick as vulnerable as any other. It throbs with encouragement and droops with the oncoming of guilt. So it is testimony to the power of my concentration and to Chloe's voluptuous exposures (call it a crime against the public pleasure for her to be seen in clothes) that, considering the uniqueness and magnitude of my marital breach, there was only a hint of sag from time to time in the fine fellow below. I was starved, in truth, for what Chloe had to offer.

Let me see if I can explain. Lovemaking with Kittredge was—I use the word once more—a sacrament. I am not at ease trying to speak of it. Whereas, I can give all away in talking about Chloe; and we were like kids in the barn; Chloe even smelled of earth and straw. But there was ceremony to embracing Kittredge.

I do not mean that we were solemn or measured. If it did not come to real desire, we might not make love for a month. When it happened, however, it certainly did; after all our years together, we still flew at each other. Kittredge, indeed, was as fierce as one of those wood-animals with claws and sharp teeth and fine fur that you can never quite tame. At its worst, there were times when I felt like a tomcat in with a raccoon. My tongue (once key to devil's heaven) was rarely now in her thoughts—rather, our act was subservient to coming together, cruelty to cruelty, love to love. I'd see God when the lightning flashed and we jolted our souls into one another. Afterward, was tenderness, and the sweetest domestic knowledge of how curious and wonderful we were for one another, but it was not in the least like getting it on with Chloe. With Chloe it was get ready for the





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rush, get ready for the sale, whoo-ee, gushers, we'd hit oil together. Recuperating, it felt low-down and slimy and rich as the earth. You could grow flowers out of your ass.

Driving that car, my heart in my teeth, and the road ice in my ice-cold fingers, I knew all over again what Chloe gave me. It was equality. We had nothing in common but our equality. If they brought us up for judgment, we could go hand in hand. Our bodies were matched in depth to one another, and we felt the affection of carrots and peas in the same meat soup. I had never known a woman so much my physical equal as Chloe.

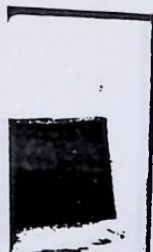
Whereas, Kittredge was the former consort of a knight, now a crippled knight. I felt like a squire in a medieval romance. While my knight was off on a crusade, I entertained his lady. If we had found a way to pick the lock of her chastity belt, I still had to mount the steps. We might see lightning and stars, yet the bedroom remained her chamber. Our ecstasy was as austere as the glow of phosphorescent lights in Maine waters. I did not see Creation; rather, I had glimpses of the heavens. With Chloe, I felt like one more Teamster with a heavy rig.

On a night of driving so unsettled as this—sleet on the cusp of freezing—there was no way to meditate for long. Rather, thoughts jumped up before me. So, I saw that Chloe had the shape of a wife, and Kittredge was still my lady. In most affairs, a kiss can remind you of many a mouth you have known. It lubricates a marriage to have a wife who reminds you of other women as well. Many a connubial union is but the sublimation of orgies never embarked upon. With Kittredge, I had hardly been enjoying the promiscuity of making love to one woman who might serve as surrogate for many.

Once, about a month after we were married, she said to me, "There's nothing worse than the breaking of vows. I always feel as if the universe is held together by the few solemn promises that are kept. Hugh was awful. You could never trust a word of his. I shouldn't tell you, darling, but when you and I first began, it was such an achievement for me. I suppose it was the bravest thing I'd ever done."

"Don't ever be that brave with me," I said, and it was no threat. At the uneasy center of my voice, I was begging her.

"I won't. I won't ever." She would have had the clear eyes





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of an angel but for a touch of mist in the blue. A philosopher, she was always trying to perceive objects at a great distance. "No," she said, "let's make a pledge. Absolute honesty between us. If either of us has anything to do with someone else, we must tell."

"I pledge," I said.

"My God," she said, "with Hugh I never knew. Is that one of the reasons he clung to that awful name, Harlot?" She stopped. Harlot, whatever he was doing at this moment, was in the wheelchair now. "Poor old Gobby," she said. Any compassion she still held for him was in this nickname.

"Why is the name Gobby?" With Kittredge, there was a time for everything and I had never asked her before.

"God's old beast. That's his name."

"One name, anyway."

"Oh, darling, I love giving people names. At least, people I care about. That's the only way we're allowed to be promiscuous. Give each other hordes of names."

Over the years, one by one, I had learned a few of them. Hugh had a fine mustache, trim pepper-and-salt. It belonged on a British cavalry colonel. Kittredge used to call him Trimskey. "Just as bright as Leon Trotsky," she'd say, "but ten times as neat." Later I found out she was, this once, not original. It was Allen Dulles who first christened him thus. That was when Hugh was working for the OSS in London during the war. Apparently Dulles repeated it to Kittredge at her wedding. Kittredge had been mad about Allen Dulles ever since meeting him at a Georgetown garden party her parents took her to during the Easter vacation of her sophomore year in Radcliffe. Ah, the poor Harvard men who tried to spark Kittredge after Allen Dulles kissed her on the cheek for good-bye.

Following the nuptials, she took to calling Hugh Tremont Montague by Trimskey. He gave her monikers in return. One was Ketchum, for Ketchum, Idaho (since Kittredge's full pedigree was Hadley Kittredge Gardiner, first name taken from Hadley Richardson, Hemingway's first wife, whom Kittredge's father, Rodman Knowles Gardiner, met in Paris in the twenties and thought was "the nicest woman ever encountered").

It had taken its own good time for me to learn a few meta-

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morphoses of my beloved's names. Ketchum, avoiding Ketchup, was transmogrified into Red—which was perfect, and stuck for a period, since Kittredge's hair was raven-black (and her skin as white as your best white marble). I also knew a lover's pain when Kittredge confessed that Hugh Montague, on notable nights, would call her Hotsky. Did people in Intelligence shift names about the way others move furniture around a room?

In any event, Gobby was the postmarital a.k.a.

"I hated," said Kittredge, "the idea that I couldn't trust Gobby's personal honesty. You do pledge, darling? We will have honesty between us?"

"We will."

My car went into a severe skid, much longer now in memory than it takes to tell. The wall of forest on one side stuttered up to me, and my front end yawed when I spun the wheel, whereupon car and I rushed viciously across the lane toward the other wall of pines at the far shoulder, now suddenly the near shoulder. I thought for a moment I had died and become a devil, for my head seemed put on backwards: I was looking down the road at the turn I had just come out of. Then, as slowly as if I were in a whirlpool at sea, the road began to revolve. Interminably. I could have been a spot of dust on a turntable. Presto!—car and I were moving forward again. I had skidded ninety degrees to the right, then had spun the other way through a full three-sixty counterclockwise, no, put on ninety more degrees to find myself going straight at last, a full one-and-a-quarter, 450-degree turn. I was beyond fear. I felt as if I had fallen out of a ten-story window, landed in a fireman's net, and was now strolling around in a glow and a daze. "*Millions of creatures*," I said aloud to the empty car—actually said it aloud!—"walk the earth unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep," after which, trundling along at thirty miles an hour, too weak and exhilarated to stop, I added in salute to the lines just recited, "*Milton, Paradise Lost*," and thought of how Chloe and I had gotten up from bed in her trailer on the outskirts of Bath a couple of hours ago and had gone for a farewell drink to a cocktail lounge with holes in the stuffing of the red leatherette booths. Just after the potions were brought, I knocked one over in a conversational sweep of my arm, and the glass shattered into intolerable little bits as if noth-

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ing much was holding together any longer. Whereupon Chloe and I both fell into an uncharacteristic brown spell, and were gloomy when we said good-bye. Infidelity was on the horror of the air.

Now I pondered those millions of creatures who walked the earth unseen. Did they whisper in Kittredge's ear as she slept, even as once they had called out to me on that long-ago day eleven years back when she grew ready to cut her wrists? Who ran the espionage systems that lived in the ocean of the spirits? A spy needed thoughts as narrow as lasers to rouse no stir. How did an agent making copies of secret papers week after week, year after year, keep from himself the awful fear that this spirit sea of misdeeds might seep into the sleep of the man who could catch him?

I passed a phone booth in a rest area and stopped the car. I was in a panic to speak to Kittredge. Abruptly it seemed that if I did not reach her at once, every last barrier between my mind and hers would be down.

What can be closer to the ages of old-ice than one corroded, pockmarked phone booth on a freezing highway in Maine? I had to raise the operator, and she had trouble repeating the number of my credit card. I was stamping my feet to keep warm before the machinery of the Bell Company was able to stir itself out of chilly sleep. The phone rang four, five, six times, and then I leaped with love at the sound of Kittredge's voice and, on the instant, recalled how my heart had once lifted equally with joy one dark night alone in a canoe in Vermont, when, behold! a galaxy of light lit up every ripple on the black waters of the pond as a full harvest moon rose exactly in the notch between two steep round hills. Druid certainties left their flush then on my heart. I knew a curious peace. So did Kittredge's voice now give ease to the stricken tunnels of my breath. I felt as if I had never heard her voice before. Let no one say I did not love my wife if after eleven years of marriage I could still discover her wonders. Most speaking tones come into my ear through filters and baffles. I hear people monitoring their larynx to purvey warmth and cold, probity, confidence, censure, approbation—we are phony voices if only by a little. After all, one's speech is the first instrument of one's will.

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Kittredge's voice came out of herself as a flower opens out of its bud, except I never knew which bloom would be first. Her voice was as amazing in anger as in love—she was never on guard for the turn of her own feelings. Only those who walk about with the notion (it can be modest) that they are an indispensable part of the universe can speak with such lack of concern for how they sound to others.

"Harry, I'm glad you called. Are you all right? I've been full of forebodings all day."

"I'm fine. But the roads are terrible. I'm not even to Bucksport."

"Are you really all right? Your voice sounds as if you just shaved off your Adam's apple."

I laughed as madly as an embarrassed Japanese businessman. It was her claim that I would have been as dark, tall, and handsome as Gary Cooper or Gregory Peck if not for my prominent Adam's apple. "I'm all right," I said. "I think I needed to talk to you."

"Oh, I need to talk to you. Can you guess what arrived today? A telegram from our friend. It's demoralizing. After being nice for so long, he's now in an absolutely deranged mood."

She was speaking of Harlot. "Well," I said, "it can't be as bad as that. What did he say?"

"I'll tell you later." She paused. "Harry, promise me something."

"Yes." I knew by her tone. "Yes," I said, "what's your foreboding?"

"Drive most carefully. There's a very high tide tonight. Please call me when you get to the dock. The water's roaring already."

No, her voice concealed nothing. Tones were flying in many directions as if she were working a dinghy buffeted by chop.

"I have the oddest thoughts," she said. "Did you just have a bad skid?"

"Never a worse," I answered. The windows of my telephone booth might be iced up, but perspiration was collecting on my back. How near to me could she get without encountering the real hurly-burly?

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"I'm all right," I went on. "I expect the worst weather is over. It feels that way." I took a chance. "Any other odd thoughts flying around?"

"I'm obsessed with a woman," she said.

I nodded intently. I felt like a boxer who is not certain which hand of his unfamiliar opponent he should respect more. "Obsessed with a woman?" I repeated.

"A dead woman," Kittredge said.

You may believe I took relief.

"Is she family?" I asked.

"No."

When Kittredge's mother died, I woke on more than one night to see Kittredge sitting at the side of the bed, her back to me, talking with animation to the bare wall on which, with no embarrassment, she could perceive her mother. (How much this had to do with my warped dream—let us call it such—about Augustus Farr, is, of course, anyone's good question.) On these earlier occasions, however, it was clear: Kittredge was in some sort of coma. She would be wide awake, but oblivious to me. When I would tell her in the morning of such episodes, she would neither smile nor frown. My account of her actions did not disturb Kittredge. It seemed fitting to the nocturnal fold that there would be occasions when those of the dead who had been near to you could still speak. Of course her son Christopher had never come back, but then he had been smashed. His death was different. He had fallen into the bottomless abyss of his father's vanity. So his demise had been rendered numb for all. In this fashion, Kittredge reasoned.

Kittredge had Highland blood both sides, and you have to know how Celtic a few Highlanders can be. Not all of the Scotch content themselves with devising controls for the law, the banks, and Presbyterian practice; some take a cottage on the interface between this world and the next. They do not blow those bagpipes for too little.

"Do you want to tell me," I now asked, "about this woman?"

"Harry, she's been dead for ten years. I don't know why she is trying to reach me now."

"Well, who is it?"

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She did not reply directly. "Harry," she said, "I've been thinking about Howard Hunt lately."

"Howard? E. Howard Hunt?"

"Yes. Do you know where he is?"

"Not really. Some place quiet, I guess, picking up the pieces."

"Poor man," she said. "Do you know I actually met him first at that party long ago when my parents introduced me to Allen Dulles. Allen said, 'Here, Kitty, meet Howard Hunt. He's an absolutely nifty novelist.' I don't think the Great White Case Officer had top powers in literary criticism."

"Oh, Mr. Dulles always went in for superlatives."

"Didn't he?" I had made her laugh. "Harry, he said to me once, 'Cal Hubbard would be the Teddy Roosevelt of our outfit if it weren't for Kermit Roosevelt.' Lord, your *father*. It *fits*!" She laughed again, yet her voice, honest as a brook full of the quick lights offered by moving clouds and pebble bed, was in shadow now.

"Tell me about the woman."

"It's Dorothy Hunt, darling," said Kittredge. "She's come right out of the woodwork."

"I didn't realize you knew her well."

"I don't. I didn't. Hugh and I had the Hunts once for dinner."

"Of course. I recall."

"And I do remember her. An intelligent woman. We had lunch a few times. So much more depth than poor Howard."

"What does she say?"

"Harry, she says, 'Don't let *them* rest.' That's all she says. As if we both knew. Whoever *them* may be."

I didn't reply. Kittredge's dismay, delicate but pervasive, leaped over the wire. I almost asked: "Did Hugh ever talk to you about the High Holies?" but I did not speak the thought. I trusted no phone entirely, certainly not my own. While we had said nothing to get any big wind up, still one did one's best to keep all conversation under some kind of damage control. So, now I merely said, "That's curious about Dorothy," and added no more.

Kittredge heard my shift of tone. She, too, was aware of the

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telephone. There was always, however, her perverse sense of the wicked. If there were monitors on this call, she would offer them a heaping plate of confusion. Kittredge now stated: "I didn't like the message from Gallstone."

"What did it say?" Gallstone—you may have guessed—was one more name for Harlot.

"Well, it was delivered. That awful handyman, Gilley Butler, was standing at my door this evening. He must have taken our dinghy and rowed across, then presented me the envelope with a raffish grin. He was awfully drunk, and acting as if the heavens would undulate should he ever smuggle me into a cave. I could see by his attitude that somebody paid him much too much to deliver it. The most awful emanation came off him. Superior and sort of sleazy all at once."

"What," I repeated, "did your message say?"

"Five hundred seventy-one days on Venus. Plus one on leap year. Eight months to do it all."

"He can't possibly be right," I replied, as if I had comprehended every word.

"Never."

We finished by telling each other that we missed each other, speaking as if it would be years rather than a couple of hours before we met again. Then we hung up. So soon as I was back in the car, I took a worn paperback of T. S. Eliot's poems out of the glove compartment. The eight months mentioned in the telegram referred to the fifth poem in the volume. We had agreed to add the number of the month—March was the third month—to the number of the poem. Venus was a garnish to distract attention, but 571 plus one, by our private convention of subtracting five hundred, gave me the seventy-first and seventy-second lines of the fifth poem, which was—dare I confess it?—"The Waste Land." To any qualified person who had the same edition of Eliot's selected poems, it would be no great work to break our code, but only Harlot, Kittredge and myself knew which book was in our employ.

Here was Harlot's message—lines 71 and 72:

*That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?*

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He had done it again. I did not know what Harlot meant, but I did not like it. I had supposed we were enjoying a truce.

In the year just after my marriage to Kittredge, when ex-husband Hugh Montague lived through the nights of the long knives, he had sent off hideous telegrams from his wheelchair. On our wedding day came the first: "Lucky are you for the dice roll eleven. You must buss each other 528 times plus two and save the sheets—A Friendly Heap" translated into:

*Your shadow at mornings striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.*

That succeeded in coloring our wedding night. Now, after all these years, he was sending personal messages again. Perhaps I deserved no less. My nostrils still reeked criminally of Chloe.

Of course, cruelty can be a cure for tension when visited on a guilty man. (So says our penal system.) Harlot's message, sinister as the fog—"that corpse you planted last year in your garden"—enabled me to climb onto the same plateau as the difficulties of the weather. I was at last ready for each little breakaway of the tires. I could think while my reflexes did the driving, and given the fruits of our call, I had a bit to go over. I was trying to decide whether Kittredge had a clue to the High Holies. I had certainly not told her, and now it was reasonably clear that Harlot hadn't either. Her voice had been too unknowing about Dorothy Hunt. Kittredge certainly appeared to be wholly unaware that Harlot and I had joined forces.

Having all this much to go over in my mind, I obviously needed the ruminative powers offered by an easier journey. So, I appreciated the change in weather as I passed through Belfast where Route 1 joined Route 3. For now, the air was a crucial degree warmer, the sleet had eased to rain, and the roads, if wet, were free of ice. I was able to settle into my thoughts. In the special file on the High Holies, Dorothy Hunt occupied a manila binder.



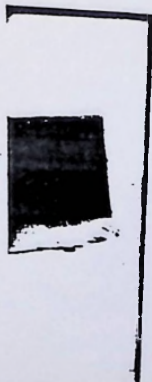
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OMEGA-3

South of the Potomac, just below Washington, the Virginia woods were not well treated by the profit-taking of the last ten years. The wildland swamps had been drained and covered with asphalt, quartered with superhighways, studded with corporate implants—I speak of office buildings—and blind-sided by molecule-like chains of condominiums. The parking lots in summer are now as bilious as natural gas. I was no lover of the development of the humid environs where I had worked for so long. And the drive from the Langley gate out to Harlot's farmhouse was traffic-jammed for all fifteen miles. His place, a pre-Civil War small beauty which he purchased in 1964, used to stand alone on an old dirt road lined with maples, but now that the four-lane had been built, the house was left on an off-highway eyebrow just twenty yards from where the trucks blasted by. A depressing metamorphosis. It did not help that after his accident, the interior had had to be partially gutted to install a ramp permitting him to propel his wheelchair from the first floor to the second.

All the same, not many occasions in my life had been more momentous than the summer day in 1982 when Harlot had invited me to work again with him. "Yes," he had said, "I need your assistance so much that I will forego my true innings." His knuckles, huge as carbuncles, fretted his wheelchair forward and back.

Harlot's call to new work was well timed. At Langley I had been in the doldrums. I was sick of walking the corridors. At Langley we had corridors not unreminiscent of the fluorescent pedestrian routes in a huge airport—we even had a wall of glass looking on the central garden. One could pass hundreds of doors on any corridor, all color-coded, leaf green, burnt orange, madder pink, Dresden blue, designed by a pastel-minded coordinator to bring cheer and logic to our cubicles. The colors were to tell you what kind of work was done behind the doors. Of course in the old days—let us say twenty and more years ago—a number of the offices were being run undercover, so the color of the door was misleading. Now only a few such doors were around. I was bored with that. My office door practiced no deception these days. My career (and my wife's) might just as



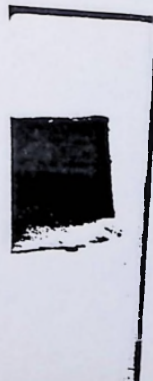


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well have been ended. In fact, as I will soon explain, Kittredge and I were not often in Washington anymore, not nearly so much as we stayed at the Keep. For a long time I had been walking a treadmill of no advancement under five Directors of Central Intelligence, no less than Mr. Schlesinger, Mr. Colby, Mr. Bush, Admiral Turner, and Mr. Casey, who, when he passed me in the hall either did not know me, or chose not to greet me by name (after more than twenty-five years in the Company!). Well, who could not see the shadow? Two former Chiefs of Station at two Third World republics, now back at Langley and ready for retirement, shared my office—what was left of my office. They served as my case officers—in this case, editors—for the books I oversaw and/or ghosted. They had reputations as burnt-out cases, much like me. Their reputations, unlike mine, were deserved. Thorpe was drunk at ten in the morning, and his eyes were like marbles, full of pep. They bounced, if they happened to meet your gaze. The other, Gamble, had a stone-dead expression and was of late a vegetarian. He never raised his voice. He was like a man who has flattened twenty years in a state penitentiary. And I? I was ready for a quarrel with anyone.

It was at exactly this time, when disaffection was collecting in my pores like bile, that Harlot summoned me to his rump office at the farmhouse in Virginia much as he must have called in several other men like myself, still ambitious enough to know rage that their careers were in irons, yet old enough to suffer the knowledge that their best years were committed and gone. Who knows what Harlot cooked up for the others? I can tell you what he talked about with me.

We, at CIA, had gone through some considerable suffering on the exposure of the Family Jewels in 1975. Maybe a few bushmen in Australia had not heard how we labored to rub Fidel Castro out, but by the time the Senate Select Committee to Study Intelligence Activities was done inquiring, there were very few bushmen. The rest of the world had learned that we were ready to kill Patrice Lumumba as well, and had gone in for LSD experiments in brainwashing so exuberantly that one of our subjects, a Dr. Frank Olson (on government contract), had jumped out a window. We hid the fact from his widow. She spent twenty years thinking her husband was an ordinary suicide,



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which is onerous for a family to believe since there are no ordinary suicides. We opened mail between Russia and the U.S. and closed it again and sent it on. We spied on high government officials like Barry Goldwater and Bobby Kennedy; we had all of those activities advertised in the marketplace. Since we are, at CIA, a proud and secretive people, we felt not unlike a convention of Methodist ministers who are sued by a fine hotel for infesting the bed linen with crab lice. The Company has never been quite the same since exposure of the Family Jewels.

In its wake, many of our top men had to go. Harlot, however, could hardly be dismissed in these, the worst of times, since he had accumulated too much sympathy at Langley for his gallant perambulations down the hall in his wheelchair. He was allowed to stay and fish the eddies. He could work on matters that would attract no attention. Of course, it was generally agreed: Harlot, too, had been left to mold.

Seven years later, however, he was calling me to action. "I ask us, Harry boy," he said, "to forgive the spears we've left in one another. There is a scandal forming that will prove worse than the Skeletons. (Which was his term for the Family Jewels.) I'd estimate about as much worse as Hiroshima was an order of magnitude beyond Pearl Harbor. The Skeletons decimated our ranks; the High Holies, if not excised, will cut us right out of the map."

When he said no more, I stepped back. "I like the name," I said. "High Holies."

"A *good* name," he agreed. Whereupon he did a quadrille with his wheelchair, to and fro, wheel to one side, wheel to the other. He was in his late sixties by now but his eyes and voice belonged to a man who could still charge the troops.

"I vouchsafe," he said, "that few things ever perplexed me as much as Watergate. We had so many ducks in the White House pond. As you have reason to know, I put in one or two myself." I nodded.

"All the same," Harlot went on, "I wasn't prepared for Watergate. That was an extraordinarily dippy operation. Nothing adds up. I had to conclude we were being entertained not by one master plan, no matter how ill conceived, but three or four by different parties. All managed to collide. When the

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stakes are high, coincidences collect. Shakespeare certainly believed that. No other explanation for Macbeth or Lear."

He had succeeded in irritating me. At this moment, I did not wish to discuss Macbeth or Lear.

"Call the break-in at Watergate act one," he said. "Good first act. Full of promise. But no answers. Now comes act two: the crash, six months later, of the United Airlines plane 553 from Washington to Chicago. It's trying to land at Midway Airport and falls short in the most unbelievable fashion. The plane rips up a neighborhood of small houses not two miles shy of the airport, and in the process kills forty-three of the sixty-one people aboard. Do you know who was on board that plane?"

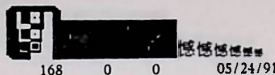
"I suppose I did once."

"The half-life of your memory retains no trace?"

"Obviously not."

"Dorothy Hunt is the most significant passenger to perish."

He held up his hand. "Now, of course, Watergate had not yet cracked open. This is December 1972, a couple of months before Senator Ervin and his committee open shop, and quite a few weeks before our wallah, James McCord, is to sing his first note. Long before John Dean tunes up. Howard Hunt had, you must remember, been breaking a lot of noxious wind up White House way to the effect that, in his immortal words, he would not be a patsy, and Dorothy Hunt was certainly tougher than Howard. In a tight spot, you'd give her the pistol." I shrugged. The point was moot. I had worked for Howard Hunt. "Still!" said Harlot, "that's an awful lot of cannon to kill one bee. Scores of people dead. Who could have done it? Not the White House. They wouldn't mug an airplane. After all, the White House couldn't even give Mr. Liddy a fatal dose of the measles, not even at his invitation, nor did they put the fatal ray on Dean, nor on Hunt, nor on McCord. How, then, could they have given the go-ahead to something so *wholesale* as this plane crash? It *could* be sabotage. The White House is obviously aware of such a possibility. The same Butterfield who will later confess to the Ervin Committee that Richard Nixon taped everything but his trips to the loo, is moved over to the Federal Aviation Administration, and Dwight Chapin of CREEP goes to United Airlines. The Nixon palace is obviously positioning itself against a run-



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away investigation. I think they also suspect us. Nixon, as an old China lobby hand, knows all about the plane that blew up years ago when Chou En-Lai was supposed to be on board. So he understands. We know how to sabotage a plane—they don't. It poses a frightful question. If flight 553 to Chicago was bugged in order to get Dorothy Hunt, then she had to be holding on to no ordinary piece of information. You don't demolish two-score civilians in order to terminate one lady unless she is in possession of an ultimate."

"What do you say is ultimate here?" I asked.

He smiled.

"I always," he said, "refer to my own values when trying to solve these matters. What would get me up for that? Well, I reasoned, I would embark on such egregious slaughter if the target, Mrs. Hunt, knows who was behind the Kennedy assassination, and I cannot afford to let that get out. Or, two, Nixon or Kissinger is a KGB mole, and target has the evidence. Or three: Elements among us have managed to dip into the Federal Reserve pond."

"What has the Federal Reserve to do with Dorothy Hunt?"

"Good Harry-boy, take a look at who else was in the Watergate Office Building back there in June 1972. The Federal Reserve kept an office on the seventh floor just above the National Democratic Committee layout. What makes you think McCord was bugging the Democrats? He could have been using the ceiling of the sixth floor to put a spike-mike into the floor of the seventh. McCord is not merely a religious monomaniac, you know. He happens to be talented.

"Try to conceive then of how long I've been brooding on these matters. It's years since Dorothy's crash. Yet I persist in thinking that this might be worse than the Family Jewels. I do keep coming back to the Federal Reserve. If a few of us were tapping into the seventh floor then, maybe we are at it still. Advance information on when the Federal Reserve is going to shift the interest rate is worth, conservatively, a good many billions." He leaned forward. He whispered into my ear. Two good words. "High Holies," he said. Then he turned his wheelchair toward me. "I have loads of stuff for you to do."

We shook hands on it. We would be rogue elephants to-



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gether. As I suspected, he was persona non grata in many an office where he needed a look at the files, and I still had access. Under one ghost's name or another, I was helping on a few pro-CIA spy novels which were not as popular as they used to be—not the *pro*-CIA jobs, anyway—as well as overseeing one or two scholarly works, not to mention dashing off an occasional magazine piece on the new invidiousness of the old Commie threat. Will it help to explain that under various names I dealt with commercial publishers as agent, author, freelance editor, and even had my pseudonym on several books I did not write so much as midwife for others. Of course, I did a few jobs as full ghost myself. If a prominent evangelist took a trip to Eastern Europe or Moscow, intermediaries called on me afterward to boil the sap of his taped meanderings into homiletic American for the patriotic subscribers of *Reader's Digest*. I mock my published work, and that is fair. My serious work had cost me more.

Indeed, I was by now my own semicomical legend at Langley. For years, ever since my return from Vietnam, I had been working, first at Harlot's behest, then—after the rupture—on my own, over a monumental work on the KGB whose in-progress title was *The Imagination of the State*. Great hopes had been attached to this book early by Harlot, and by others. The job, however, was never honestly begun. Too monumental. Notes proliferated, yet over a decade and more the actual writing hardly progressed. I was bogged down in confusions, lack of desire, and too many petty literary jobs. A number of years ago, in secret with myself—I did not even tell Kittredge—I gave up *The Imagination of the State* in preference to the literary work I really wished to do, which was a detailed memoir about my life in the CIA. This book progressed apace. I had already, in the couple of days I could give to it each week, been able to describe my childhood, my family, my education, my training, and my first real job—a stint in Berlin, circa 1956. I had gone on to cover my station work in Uruguay and an extended stint in Miami during that period when we were having our undeclared war with Castro.

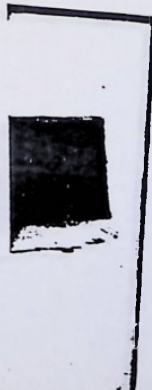
I thought my memoir was reading decently (even if I was my only critic), but I was tempted to call it a novel. It was impermissibly candid. I had included material on several of our assassina-



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tion attempts. Some of that was public knowledge, but a good deal remained privileged. I felt much at sea. This very long memoir, call it my novel, had not yet taken me to Vietnam, nor back to my work in the Nixon White House during the early seventies. Nor did it include my affair with Kittredge and our marriage. I had navigated my way across half of a large space (my past) and if I put it in that fashion, it is because I did not see how I could publish the manuscript, this Alpha manuscript as I called it—working title: *The Game*. Of course, it did not matter how it was cristered. By the pledge I had taken on entering the Agency, it was simply not publishable. The legal office of the Agency would never permit this work to find a public audience. Nonetheless, I wished *The Game* to shine in a bookstore window. I had simple literary desires. I even descended into depression at fashioning in secret so massive a work. Was I to be one of the first to create a manuscript that would have to be passed from hand to hand as a species of American *samizdat*? Could I take such a plunge? For if I did not, I was misrepresenting myself to myself. Such self-deception may be analogous to looking in the mirror and not meeting one's eyes.

In any event, since my colleagues in the Company knew no more than that my work on the KGB had not gotten off the ground, I was being treated (and CIA is good at this) as one of the *sad people*. It is equal to being an unproductive child in a large and talented family. Indeed, I was encouraged to work on semi-sabbaticals at home in Maine for weeks, sometimes months, at a time. Yet, if I was thick with resentment on the one hand, it was joy on the other to be rid of those low Virginia suburbs. Of course, I still pretended to be taking work papers for *The Imagination of the State* back to Maine, back to the Keep, but, oh, how many trips I had made lately to Langley, how many odd memos I had been hunting down for Harlot along with files I needed for purported legitimate intellectual burrowings. Administratively speaking, my need to know was too complex to keep tabs on. I had been around so long that they preferred to ignore me. Seen as a self-absorbed nest-builder, I was able to get copies of hot stuff out in my briefcase along with reams of papers I was entitled to withdraw. It was worth one's limbs to be caught on some of the high-temperature sheets I passed on to Harlot. The irony





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is that I journeyed all the way from Maine to Washington to pick up the consecrated bread, but delivered it just fifteen miles down the line from Langley to where Harlot still steered himself around in that small Virginia farmhouse once shared with Kit-tredge.

Yes, we were on a mission; the High Holies. And I could just about lose my neck for that—which is to say, my job, my pension, my freedom. Jail was conceivably on the horizon. Yet, not for anything could I trust Harlot's sentiments toward me. All the same, I had signed up with him as if he were fate itself. There are more metastases in guilt than in cancer itself. I remember muttering in my throat at the power of such a premise even as I drove along in Maine.

OMEGA-4 | The truth is that after the strain of all this icy traction, I was now handling the car with such unholy ease I had to wonder at the felicity of my condition. The road was a riverbed to my thoughts, and carried me down the dark highway between Bucksport and Ellsworth. As I passed through Sears, the houses looked as white under my headlights as the bones of Indians long dead.

On I went past shuttered Doughnut Dairy Queens and the last outpost of McDonald's. The shopping mall at Ellsworth went by my windshield like light from a shattered glass, the oil-soak of the empty parking lot gleaming in new steams and mists. At twelve miles an hour I traversed the short bridge from Tremont to the island of Mount Desert and entered a cloud again. Once more, I could not see past the silver droplets of fog that danced before me in the car beams. I would have to crawl the last ten miles along the road that goes by Prettypmarsh where



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the centerline is worn away.

The western half of Mount Desert does not offer such fine towns as Northeast Harbor, Bar Harbor, or Seal Harbor; our western half is not notable. In daylight, the road winds through miles of second-growth trees and thicket; our nearby mountains are wooded and offer few lookouts. Our marshes and ponds are likely to be covered with acid-yellow algae. Our villages—Bass Harbor, Seal Cove—are hardworking, the hamlets are poor. Often, no more than four or five trailers, two or three frame houses and a cinder-block post office will squat by the highway. The routes are not often favored by a sign.

All the same, knowing every curve, I was ready for the unmarked right turn onto the two-mile dirt road that leads to the wharf where our dinghy is stowed. On I drove, past lobstermen's front yards full of old tires and rusted iron of every description. Everyone's lights were out. I passed a house I never liked—it consisted of two trailers connected by a shed. A father, Gilley Butler—the man who brought the envelope to Kittredge earlier today—and his son, Wilbur Butler, lived on the premises with their mates, whelps, and assorted oafs, cold categories of description, but the Butlers would have been hung as poachers three centuries ago in England, and put in stocks right here. Now, I will not say more than that the father had had a series of savage arguments with my father, and the son, Wilbur, had done as well with Hugh Montague. In recent years, Wilbur had been a familiar to the police and the courts—he had belted an old woman around pretty badly when she discovered him robbing her trailer. I did not even know as I passed whether Wilbur was still in the state penitentiary. I had heard rumors at the post office that he would soon be free, and I did not enjoy the possibility. On those separate occasions when his vehicle used to meet mine on our mutual dirt road, he always looked at me with a squint of such quintessential hostility that I also spent an hour in the Bar Harbor Library on the genealogy of the Butlers. They were an old Mount Desert family, paupers and near-paupers for fifteen generations, and half of the children were dubiously christened. So I could not satisfy the suspicion that would connect them by illegitimate blood to Augustus Farr, but I did find, at least, the diary of Damon Butler, first mate of Farr's crew, the

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one who wrote of Farr's "practize of piracie."

In any event, each time I drove by those two trailers linked by their slatternly shed, I was prepared for unpleasantness. The pall of old drunken nights and heavy-handed yard fights with crotch-shots, stomping boots, old blood, and old puke, hovered around the broken lobster pots. Beer cans empty as clam shells abounded.

It was two long miles to reach the wharf. Our back roads are rutted. Along my camp track are furlongs of bramble by either ditch, and you pass many a feverish profusion of weeds that have sprouted over old battle trenches—in this case, the foundations dug for cheap homes whose walls never went up. The miasma of insufficient funds pervades the space. Bottle-green horseflies as large as bumblebees harass you in summer, and loathsome winged slugs imperil your hair should you jog. Through March, if the snow melts, the ground looks like a Bowery beggar sleeping it off. A heavy thaw introduces you to the mud of World War I. There were times when I could not traverse the two miles from the highway to the wharf without winching our jeep forward a hundred feet of cable at a time, but tonight the mud was still crusted, the ice, mixed with gravel, gave a base, and I went down that deserted route past small and desolate barrens. In one raw clearing, the skeleton of an old boat trailer lay rusted in two. Even in the dark, I knew these sights. I knew them well, and was glad to reach the last delta of lanes and tracks that went off to different camps on the back shore.

At our wharf, I pulled into the car shed, but before I even shut my motor I could hear the bay water taking its churn through the channel. The roar was louder than it had ever been. I could have been listening to the ongoing growl of an earthquake. It was then I took off my topcoat and left it in the car. It would hardly be automatic to row the dinghy across the channel tonight.

I am used to living with fear, I suffer such occupational stresses the way a good businessman worries about cash flow and his breaches of government regulations, his lawsuits, his health, and where he should be buried. No, it is worse for me. I live with a prime fear. My specific professional assignment invariably becomes my first fear. There is also, however, what



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Harlot used to call *Queen-for-a-Day*. It is the old heart-in-throat on the day of battle.

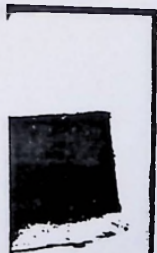
I was now full of *Queen-for-a-Day*. I did not wish to row from the back side of Mount Desert over to Doane's—only a couple of hundred feet, as I have stated, but how often had the water looked this bad? The wharf planks shook. Out there was no chop, but a horripilative race. If the dinghy overturned, I might not survive for a minute in such freezing water. Could I swim even twenty yards before my lungs locked? So, I debated whether to retrace my route to the state road and drive on to Southwest Harbor where I could find a motel for the night. The thought was unsatisfactory, but the dinghy might be worse.

I did not debate it long. Since I wished to see Kitredge now, I had to try the channel. Bless Harlot. If I made it, I'd feel a lot better. And if I never got to shore at all, well, cleanse my soul of Chloe, I might be absolved between the oarlock and the ocean ground.

Into our dinghy I got. We have several that are aged, wooden, leaky, and as seaworthy as an old sailor, but stowed on the wharf right now was our newest, a fiberglass with walnut seats and shiny fittings. While it had its vices, including the tendency of all plastic shells to bob like a bubblehead, it reacted quickly to the oars. Sometimes you need a handsome fool to take you through a storm.

I slid the boat off the wharf into the quieter churn on the lee side, leaped in myself to face the bow, slammed oars into locks, and, in a flurry, set out to cross the seventy yards of the channel without careening more than three hundred yards downstream. More than that, and Doane Island would be lost, the dinghy loose in the reaches of Blue Hill Bay, an impossible prospect on this night.

Let me say it was the purest example of rowing with one oar, blade to port, that I had ever tried. The starboard oar was hardly more than an outrigger. I bucked up and down like a Yankee on a Houston rodeo machine. A full splat of ice water, heavy as the tail of a ten-pound fish, smacked me across the face in the middle of a stroke. I kept rowing with my left arm. One misjudged pull and we'd be running downstream through the middle of the channel. The water came at me in a froth, slamming its impreca-





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tions against that stupid plastic shell. Speak of getting wet—I was drenched. I had a first premonition of drowning. The bow slammed down into a trough and up a wall of water, which shattered on my face, gorged my throat. I coughed, I rowed, I would have prayed but I heard a fisherman singing in Greek. It was no Greek I knew. More fearsome than Gaelic were the sounds. They turned my head. They twisted the bow. For the second time this night, I went into a spin and lost my oars, which is to say, for one stroke I lost all sense of which blade to use. I had reversed my inner switches—some fatal flaw within!—and went hurtling downstream, hurtling is the word, stern first downstream, and shipping water. Mad strokes with the starboard oar, both oars, port oar again—I came out of the spin. I was within ten yards of the shore of Doane, and had pushed through the channel. I was now between two large off-shore rocks.

In that placid pool I rested. I had five more yards of water to cross, and but thirty yards left to me of the island of Doane. I was freezing and my lungs burned like a grass fire, but it would take one more effort. Sitting between the rocks, backing on the oars to keep position, how I heard the wind! I was coming back to Kittredge, to my good grass widow Kittredge, and in my mind I saw her features twist. A fury was on her face. "Go away, Harry," said the wind.

I laid hands on the oars. "Doane is where I am supposed to be tonight," I told myself with all the simplicity (and unaccountable confusion) one brings to a ticket window when purchasing a long-arranged journey, and pushed off, took five good strokes with the port oar and two with both before the bow banged into a dark ledge, caromed off, and lifted onto a strand of stone and pebble. The sound of those small rocks grinding under the weight of the bow was as satisfying to my ears as the crunch of a bone for a dog. I was on my land. The gamble had been eminent and worthwhile. I felt no less bombarded than the Prince of Wales after a night in World War I trenches, and felt no less a prince. I was also heaving, trembling, and soaked to the bone.

I pulled the boat out, dragged it up beyond the last fretwork of seaweed into the tall grass at the southern point of Doane's



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Given the wind, I not only turned the dinghy over, but cached the oars beneath and tied the painter to a tree. Then I staggered up Long Doane, the main trail on the island, all of four hundred yards long, in the direction of the Keep, which sat in the waist looking westward across Blue Hill Bay.

If the barrens on the other side of the channel are blighted and marsh-ridden, Doane has beauty. Our small forest is favored with the deep velvet of many a mossy cave. Dark green is our prevailing color in spring, summer, and fall; our trails are red needle. Stands of spruce tower over hackmatack while pitch pines bend to the solicitations of the wind. They pray to the seas with one limb and raise a sword with the other. They undulate to the flight of gulls and shake with the passage of the geese. They stand with the mist on the edge of shore.

Considering that I had come so near to foundering in the dark, this must seem a calm description of our island by day, but then, it is the silences of an island that prevail. I had no more than to step ashore and my senses began to quiet. I could see the island as it would appear to me in daylight, and knew each green chamber I approached, each porch of ledge I passed along the shore. The island was like a house. We felt as if we inhabited a dwelling within a dwelling. I am near to exaggeration, I know, but the Keep with no one but Kittredge and myself in winter would have been cavernously large if not for Doane's surrounding embrace. To inhabit a circle within a circle is to enter a spell.

What do I attempt to say? In our era of heartless condominiums, Kittredge and I still lived like a bankrupt count and countess. As real estate, the Keep was much too vast for two. Onto the first building, a stone farmhouse built as a fort for Farr, my great-great-grandfather, Doane Hadlock Hubbard, attached a barn. Other generations added plumbing and partitions. The barn served as a camp for family overflow in summer, and then there was the year when my mother brought her lavish taste to the property and managed to dragoon my father into hiring an architect to design us a long, blonde-wood, much-glassed living room that cantilevered out from the second floor to arch over Blue Hill Bay. When finished, we looked across the water to the west and could glimpse other islands rising luminous in the

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dawn or slipping away like ships down the horizon into the nocturnal mist; we saw tropical sunsets in Maine. This modern room was so reminiscent of a small first-class lounge on a well-appointed ocean liner that we came to call it the Cunard.

I was then returning to a house whose parts were so separately named as the Cunard, the Camp, the Vault, and the Keep (which last title denoted the original farmhouse, but, to preserve confusion, was employed equally for the whole). We dwelt in the Old Keep—what else could one title it?—by winter, and inhabited everything but the Vault in summer when Kittredge's cousins arrived—and their children, as well as my cousins and their wives with their children. Then the rites continued as before. In boyhood, I used to spend two weeks each summer with my father on Doane. One trial of passage in adolescence had been to muster enough family madness to jump off the balcony of the Cunard into the waters of Blue Hill Bay below. That was a time-consuming plunge of thirty-plus feet which gave you ample measure of the eternal distance down. It took forever to reach the water (otherwise equal to a second and a half). It was pure happiness, however, to come bubbling up to the ice-cold surface again. What virtue hummed in your blood as you swam to shore. My cousins and I were heroes to ourselves on the memorable first day when we could break out of terror and take the leap.

That had now become the first feat of summer for another generation of children. How full of sound was the house as they came racing up the stairs for one more go. In winter, however, while Kittredge and I might occasionally use the fireplace in the Cunard and work on warm days by the afternoon light that came through its full windows, we kept for the most part to the rooms of the Old Keep, just the two of us, living in such calm and silence that each chamber became steeped in its own mood and could not have been more particular if it had had a signature. Sometimes I felt as if I knew my rooms in the way a farmer knows his livestock. But for fear that few would understand, I might suggest that I spoke to them, and they replied to me. Leave it at such. I make the point only to insist, for those who would believe us, that Kittredge and I were not lonely.

I, however, was still outside, and aware suddenly of how close I was to frostbite. The heat of rowing ashore, the glow of



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navigating Long Doane in the dark, was gone. Abruptly, I was running. I had plunged with no warning from inner warmth to spasms of cold, and I came up to the main door of the Keep with such stiff hands, I could hardly mate the key to the lock.

Once inside, I looked about for Kittredge, but no one answered my call. I could not believe that she was sleeping in our bedroom instead of waiting up for my arrival. As disappointed as a boy who is refused a dance, I did not climb the stairs but went wandering down the hall to a mud room off the pantry. There, I stripped my wet gray flannel suit, and put on an old shirt and gardening pants with a faint but unmistakable whiff of sweat and fertilizer, a mixed odor I would hardly applaud, but maybe I was full of the need to pay wages for the pleasure taken tonight. Or did I not wish to see Kittredge in the clothes I wore while with Chloe?

I put down a tot of Bushmills Irish, which required taking three steps from the mud room to the private stores in the pantry, and my shivering eased. I threw in another shot, and began to feel like a workable manifest of myself. Famous words, uttered by legions of Americans, came to my lips: Let's get it over with.

The fortitude of the whiskey was watered by the stairs. The hall began to seem as long as my childhood memory of it. The door to our bedroom was closed. I tried the knob softly. The door was locked. A bolt went through my heart equal to that moment when the accused is found guilty in court. I rattled the knob. "Kittredge," I cried aloud.

I heard a rustle on the other side. Or did I merely suppose I had? My ears were confused by the wind. It was pounding and blathering on the storm windows outside, chattering, chewing like birds on a corpse. "Kittredge, for God's sake," I called out and had an image, immediate and inerasable, of Kittredge in pale crimson bleeding waters. The bathtub, where I had found her once, was still the same tub.

I was ready then to break the door, but her voice spoke at that moment. I heard clear articulated vowels that might come from a neat old lady who is altogether dotty. She sounded exactly like her mother.

"Oh, Harry," she said, "do wait a minute. Oh, dear man,

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don't come in. Not yet."

If my body had suffered chills tonight, now my mind suffered the cold. Something was certainly wrong.

"Darling," she said, "I just heard frightful news. I can hardly tell you." Was it the wind? I did not know whether it was the wind. There seemed some lament in the air.

"Harry," said Kittredge through the door, "Hugh is dead. They killed him, I fear. Gobby is dead."

OMEGA-5 | I cried out: "Kittredge, unlock the door." On those occasional but startling nights when she would speak to her dead mother, she would croon a tuneless lullaby. Right now she was making some such sound.

In the silence that ensued, I tried to descend into the fact. Harlot was dead.

"Kittredge, I implore you. Please talk to me."

"Harry," her voice was undeniably strange, "can you leave me alone?"

"Alone?"

"For just a little while."

If my knock had caught my wife in bed with a lover, her panic could not have been more evident.

There was no lover, however, behind that door. Just the presence of his death. My heart followed this recognition. Death was as intimate to her fine senses as Chloe's rut on mine.

"I can't leave you here," I said, "unless you tell me more." When she did not reply, I said again, "Tell me!"

"Hugh washed ashore in the Chesapeake. Shot." She came close to halting, but went on. "Security says it's suicide. That's what they are going to announce."

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"Who gave you this information?"

When she offered no answer, I knocked on the door again.

"You have to let me in."

"I won't. Never now." She said this with such determination that I wondered whether she had heard about Chloe? But when? It could only be after our phone call.

"I'm not sure," I said, "how safe it is for either of us to be alone."

"Safe enough." Another tone was entering her voice—the limitless anger that stirs at the obduracy of a mate.

"Kittredge, let me in. Do let me in."

"Do let me in. Oh, do," said Kittredge.

I backed off. Harlot's death still seemed far away. He had inhabited my psyche since I was sixteen. But now he was dead. In a day or two, *they* would say Harlot was a suicide. Someone inside had to have made the call to Kittredge.

I went back to the mud room, picked up the wet gray pin-stripe off the hook, and carried it and my sopping blue oxford shirt and underwear to the laundry on the other side of the pantry. I did not know much about these matters but obviously was not without an inkling that our dryer might flagellate the suit. No matter. I could not live much longer in gardening clothes. It was like sniffing the shovel used for the grave. May I submit that I took another tot of Bushmills. It is hell not to know whether you mourn a dead friend or are relieved that an implacable and/or treacherous superior is gone.

In truth, however, I was not having any pronounced reaction. What would you do if you received incontrovertible news that the Lord had died? You might continue making your breakfast. In ten weeks, or ten years, the edge of this knowledge could be as sharp as a knife, but now I was waiting for my suit, listening to its slap-tap going around in the dryer. Outside, in the open shed, some small animal, a raccoon perhaps, fresh from hibernation, was rattling the cans. The drip of the laundry sink came down, drop for drop. In the corner, undone by damp, a little plaster had crumbled to the floor. That dust, sad and pleasureless, caused me to think of Harlot's remains. Would he be cremated? Had he given instructions? Other unanswerable questions rose one by one, and fell in unison with the water tap.

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I was trying to hold off the idea that I was in trouble. I did not know if my warning system had collapsed, but I did not have a sense that anyone was traveling toward me. Of course, how could anyone cross the channel tonight? Thinking this, I had to recognize my wits were asleep. Despite the chop, a good power boat would have no undue trouble reaching here from Bartlett's Island or Seal Cove.

A cobweb in the near corner of the laundry room began to claim my attention. On the spider's back was a species of yellow face, or at least some small markings like eye sockets, a spine of line for the nose, something close to a mouth and chin. I meditated upon these cosmic clues like a drunk who regards the wonders of a bashed-up fingernail while galaxies of the night's failure wheel about.

My suit had to be ready. Ready or not—I think the Bushmills was having its untoward effect—I opened the dryer door, pulled out shirt, underwear, vest, jacket and pants, all more muddled by now than fruit in an Old Fashioned, and got dressed.

It was at this moment that my hand went up to my breast pocket. Only my desire to account for all the events of this night can oblige me to confess the next detail. My passport—soaked, doubtless, in the crossing of the channel—had been left in my breast pocket while the suit was being flung about in the dryer. Now its official pages, as I soon discovered, were all puffed up. I had a biscuit for a document. The print was barely visible. What a stupidity! I had been carrying this particular passport ever since I commenced the High Holies. Harlot had obtained it for me to use abroad should I have to decamp on short notice. William Holding Libby was the sweet alias Montague had bestowed—a god-awful name, but no matter. Should all go wrong, it was my trap door. I kept it on me. Now, standing on the bare-wood floor of the laundry, wearing my still damp and battered suit, I seemed incapable of attaching myself to the immediate situation. That is detachment! I was in some exotic realm where the passage of time does not bring you back to any of your responsibilities.

All the same, I wasn't certain if I cared to knock on my bedroom door, no, not to be rejected again. Yet what other

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course was open? I felt no better and perhaps no worse than a man who is being asked by a superior to justify an outrageous expense account. How silent was the house as I climbed the stairs.

Our bedroom door was slightly ajar. Not opened, but cracked. Had Kittredge gone to look for me? It did not seem probable. More likely, she had had a small change of heart, enough to open the bolt. Of course, that did not mean I was welcome.

Before I stepped into the room, I could hear her speaking. I did not have to make out the words to know by her tone, loud and a bit abstract, as if addressing a deaf person, that she was talking to the wall. How I hoped it was her mother, hoped for it so devoutly I visualized Maisie Minot Gardiner before me with her white hair, strong white teeth, and the parrot's voice that gracious ladies often have (as if they would not dream of using a phrase that had not been uttered first by some more appropriate person—the tones coming out of Eleanor Roosevelt's throat were the first, perhaps, to draw attention to this phenomenon).

Kittredge's mother had eyes like the purple-blue of the hybrids that grew in her garden. I knew the names of wildflowers, but Maisie bothered only with brand-new species. She grew the tallest flowers, super-zinnias, four and five feet high and fabulously bright. If you put a Bonnard on an easel in her garden, the palette would have been dominated by Maisie's blooms. On warm days those blossoms swayed to their own mood, much like Maisie. She was notoriously perky in her opinions. "Harry, don't be a fool about the French," she could say, "they are simply not to be trusted."

Yes, I prayed Kittredge was speaking to Maisie, but knew she was not.

"I will," I now heard my wife say, "follow you nowhere."

The door opened at my touch. It was exactly as I expected. That is to say, it was a good deal worse than my hopes. Kittredge sat in a chair facing the wall. She wore a white nightgown, no whiter than her skin, which made her look both nude and draped at once. Her hair had never seemed darker or more lustrous, and her eyes were no longer full of mist. They glowed. It is not common for blue eyes to glow in a modestly lit bedroom, but

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I could have sworn that the light came from within. She was certainly oblivious to me.

"Hugh, I warned you," she said aloud. "I prayed for you. Now I am free. I will not accompany you out of this house."

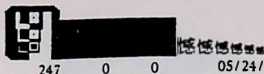
On that occasion, not long after we were married, when I first heard her talking to her mother, I made the mistake of telephoning from Doane's all the way to McLean, Virginia, where a psychiatrist, on CIA contract, kept his office. Kittredge had come close to not forgiving me. Ignore the damage done to her career (and mine) now that such an episode had been implanted in her file; this was the least of my error. What she could not forgive was the simple lack of respect. "I love my mother," she said to me, "and it's a grace that I am able to talk to her. Can't you see? That was an overbearing thing to do—phone a doctor. Harry, I will think we are not suited for one another if you try such a barbarism again. You were calling my gift an infirmity."

She did not have to repeat herself around me. I did my best to mend the broken link. I had, after all, spoken to the psychiatrist but once. When he called again, on follow-up, I implied that Kittredge and I had gotten very drunk together—a highly uncharacteristic state of affairs for us, I said, and her acts under intoxication had not quite squared with mine. That was how I put it, and added, "After all, Doctor, a person's got a right to veer off their bearings by a quadrant or so when a parent dies."

"Call it a quart or so," he said, and we both made a point of laughing, first in harmony, then in counterpoint. Why is phony laughter musically more structured than the real stuff?

Career loss for my wife was limited to a notation in her 201 file: *Psychiatric aid solicited on May 19, 1975*. Given the number of alcoholics, divorcees, and discovered homosexuals among us (no worse, I would warrant, than in a high-pressure corporation) I hoped the listing would not do real damage. I knew, however, that the slopes were getting slippery. Our marriage had been an in-house scandal comparable to a general's wife running away with a major.

All of this may help to explain why I now walked around Kittredge's chair as if I circumnavigated a holy man. Be certain, I did not fetch water to wash her face, nor chafe her feet, nor



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think to shake her, or even touch her. With all the habits of a life trained to take hold of things, there was nothing to do but sit down.

She remained still for a long time. Then she began to nod her head. She said to the wall, "Gobby, you never could bring yourself to admit the truth to a soul. But you can tell me. If you think it's important, darling, perhaps you should."

It was like a conversation on a roof when someone is ready to jump and the police look to dissuade him. I suspect the dialogue on such occasions comes to seem natural. Kittredge spoke to the wall as if, no question, Harlot was there. I confess it soon began to seem less exceptional to me. Our bedroom, too ascetic for my taste, too much like an upstairs chamber in a good New England inn—even the white flounces on the counterpane were professionally chaste—were put in no disarray by the intensity of Kittredge's words. When she ceased speaking, the room took up its white pervasive silence.

"Harry, get the fuck out, will you?"

Through our years together, she rarely used the word. But then I was not certain she had spoken. Could that have been Harlot's voice issuing from her larynx?

Kittredge arched forward in her chair. "You are covered with seaweed," she said aloud. "Oh, Gobby, pull it off. You look like you're wearing a wig." She laughed loudly in what was nearly a man's voice, and then as the laugh continued, the tone became unmistakably hearty. Some men laugh as if even the embers in a fireplace, and the wrapper leaves of a good Havana, are part of the splendid service that surrounds them. My God, I thought, she is laughing just like my father. Then her features took on an expression to remind me of Allen Dulles, equally as departed as my father.

Once in Vietnam, after a carouse through the *Department Store* (our name for the largest brothel in Saigon), I ended in a hotel room with a young and tiny Vietnamese prostitute who procured me opium. I smoked it with a great sense of sin, and vomited up my dinner with a whole sense of redemption. Afterward, the peace of the pipe came to me, and I began to hallucinate. The face of the whore became the face of my mother, and then the face of Kittredge whom I was in love with from afar.



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After a while, I was able to turn the features of this Vietnamese prostitute into any woman I chose.

In our bedroom, however, I could not select the face I wished to see next, nor did I have any happy confidence that I was afloat on misty clouds of controllable hallucination. Rather, each set of features came forth as if someone was there to work her flesh. Upon Kittredge's delicate upper lip appeared to sprout the rough pepper-and-salt brush of Harlot's mustache. His wire-rimmed spectacles were on her nose, her full head of hair became his half-bald dome, and he stared at me. Next, he spoke. It came through Kittredge's mouth, but it could as well have been his voice. "You'll find out, Harry. She's a consummate liar."

The mustache faded with the spectacles. Her mane of black hair belonged to her again. Kittredge began to weep.

"Gobby, take me with you. I'm lonely here." Her grief soon passed. Like a child declaring a quick end to the previous mood, a new expression moved over her features, a leer. It was the private look that only Chloe could offer, her come-into-my-domain leer. You would not see that turn on Chloe's mouth until you were naked against her and the fiend was parting the insulations of the flesh; the baubles were ready to gleam. Released at last!

I was feeling odd impulses. To be walking on the avenue and feel an abrupt inclination to go down a side street is not an uncommon impulse. Presumably it comes from oneself. Here, I had no doubt. The suggestions coming to me were not my own. I was like an iron filing skittering about on a plate as magnets are shifted beneath. Powerful as gods are those magnets. Whatever compulsion delivered me periodically to the door of Chloe's trailer was now on the prowl for my wife. A wash of lust, pure as wild goat, came into my loins. The screw-grease heats reserved for Chloe were over me again. I cannot bear to confess my next thought. Colder than Harlot was my heart: I wanted to bring Kittredge to the Vault.

But I had invoked Harlot's name. That gave up the game. I broke into a sweat. Was it Harlot who was coaxing me toward the Vault?

Leaving Kittredge in her chair, I went down to the first floor



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of the Keep. There I lit the fire in our den. It was the warmest room we had. When other lights were out, and the fire was well along, the stained wood of the old barn planks enriched the walls with the color of bourbon and brandy. One could summon the illusion that one's marriage and profession were not without their liaison to the universal hearth.

Now, however, my thoughts were as livid as the obsessions of an insomniac. I sprawled into an old leather chair and studied the fire. I did my best to empty my mind. I had gifts for meditation; techniques, as you may suspect, to restore detachment. I needed peace in the way an exhausted general needs sleep. After twenty minutes of seeking to compose myself, I received instead the poor coin of the substitute: apathy.

It was at this moment that the telephone on the end table began to ring. That was not common at this hour. Ten years ago, calls sometimes came from Langley in the middle of the night, but not lately. At this moment, however, what impressed me most was my quiet expectation that the phone was going to ring. Then it did.

OMEGA-6 | I knew the voice before I could utter the name. "Chloe," I said.

"I hate to call you like this," she began. A full amateur's pause followed, as if only now had it even occurred to her—"Can we talk?" she asked.

Was guilt still skewing my senses? I had the notion that Kittredge was stirring in the bedroom. "Yes, we can talk," I said. But my voice was low enough to assure her we could not.

"I've got to see you. I wanted to call you hours ago, but I didn't know if it was okay."



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"How is the weather back in Bath?" I make no excuse for saying this. I might have said anything to purchase a moment. Then, I added, "Aren't the roads bad?"

"My four-wheel-drive happens to be a big fat lemon on the ice, but it will be all right. Harry," she said, "something has happened. I've got to see you. Tonight."

"Well," I said, "there's nothing open now."

"I want to come to your place."

"Yes," I said. "You're certainly welcome, but you could never find it."

"Oh," she said, "I know your place. I know the road. I lived near Doane one winter."

"You did?"

"Sure," she said, "I was shacked up for a while with Wilbur Butler. I lived in the double trailer down the highway."

I saw those car carcasses rusting in the front yard.

"How is it I never had a sight of you then?"

"I just lived with Wilbur for a couple of months. He never let me out of bed. I used to watch through the window when you drove by. 'Boy, he's cute,' I used to say to Wilbur. Did he get to hate you!"

I thought again of the malevolence in Wilbur's eye when we passed on the road. "I guess he did," I answered. I could hear her breathing. "Chloe," I said, "it is not at all a good idea to come here tonight."

"You're spinning your wheels," Chloe said. Her voice showed the same anger she brought to carnal junction. "Now!" she always said at such times. "Harder, you son of a bitch! Harder!" Yes, the echoes were there. "Harry, it's got to be tonight," she said.

"Why? Why tonight?"

"You're not safe." She paused. "I'm not safe," she said. She paused again. "Have they gone through your house?" she asked.

"No."

"They went through mine."

"What?"

"While I was out having that last drink with you. They went through every last thing in the trailer. They cut open the stuffing

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in the furniture. They broke into my picture frames. They took apart my gas stove. They slit my mattress. They dumped the bureau drawers." She began to cry. She cried like a strong woman who has just received news that a relative was maimed in an accident. "Harry, I sat there for an hour. Then I went through what I own. I was prepared for the worst, but they didn't steal a thing. They even put my costume jewelry in a neat pile on the bed. And my bikini panties. And my red and black bra. Right next to it, what do you think? They laid out one roach. I toked a little marijuana last New Year's Eve and hid the roach at the bottom of my drawer. They laid it right next to my costume jewelry. I hate them," she said.

"Them?"

"If it had been thieves, they would have taken my TV, my microwave, my stereo, my clock-radio, my Winchester with the walnut-burl stock, my chainsaw. These have to be cops." She thought about it. "Special cops." She asked, "Harry, what were they looking for?"

"I don't know."

"Is it connected with you?"

"I don't know that either."

"What kind of work you do?"

"I told you. I write and edit."

"Harry, come on. I'm not dumb." She dropped her voice. "Are you in secret work?"

"Not at all."

This mistruth set her weeping again. I felt one pang of pure sympathy. Chloe's things poked and grabbed, tossed about; here was I lying to her.

"Wilbur's father, Gilley, used to say, 'The Hubbard family may be in the CIA, but that don't make them better than you or me.' If he was drunk, he would say that. Every time you drove by."

It had never occurred to me that our Maine neighbors had any notion of what we did. "I can't talk about it, Chloe."

Now her voice began to rise. "Do you have any understanding of me at all, or am I just one more suck-and-fuck?" Yes, her voice was on the rise.

"The mark of how much I feel for you," I said as slowly as

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I could, "is that I love my wife, do you understand, I do love her, yet I still see you."

"That's elegant," she said. "I'll keep the change."

Are not all such conversations the same? We went on for five more minutes, and then another five, before I could hang up, and when I took my hand from the phone, I was full of misery. Any shield of detachment I had managed to fashion about my double life had been smashed by the phone call. It was now crucial to go back to our bedroom, to Kittredge, and I suffered this thought with so much intensity that I had to wonder if something I could not yet name had come near, so near that I raced up the stairs by twos and threes to the upstairs hall. Outside our bedroom, however, my will turned in on itself, and I began to feel as weak as a man sitting up with a fever. I even had one of those fantasies that appear to rise from our limbs themselves when they are aching with illness but curiously happy. I was able to conceive of Kittredge asleep in her bed. She would be in deep slumber—so went my thought—and I would ensconce myself in a chair and watch over her. With all the care incumbent on maintaining such an image, I took the last steps to our bedroom door, looked in, and indeed she was asleep even as I had conceived. What relief to possess this much of my wife; her unspeaking presence was superior to the loneliness of being without her. Could I take that as a sign? For how many years had no more than the sight of her freckled forearm holding a tennis racquet been my passport to happiness?

I stared at her as she lay on the bed, and enjoyed the first sense of relief since I had come home, as if in truth I was again virtuous. I loved her again, loved her as I had on the first day, no, not on the first day of our affair, but in the hour I saved her life.

That was the most notable achievement of my life. During a bad day, I would wonder if it was the only achievement. I had, when all was said, a simple notion of grace. I never saw love as luck, as that gift from the gods which put everything else in place, and allowed you to succeed. No, I saw love as a reward. One could find it only after one's virtue, or one's courage, or self-sacrifice, or generosity, or loss, had succeeded in stirring the power of creation. Therefore, if I felt love now, I might not



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be wholly unredeemed. The apathy I had suffered before was but a clue to the great fatigue of my soul. I was not a burnt-out case so much as a wholly belabored one, my own morphine for holding off loss. I was not, however, void of grace, no, not if my love for Kittredge still lived in that rose arbor where sorrow rises from the heart.

I dimmed the lights so she could sleep, and sat beside her bed in the near dark. How long I was there I cannot say—a few minutes or was it more?—but a tapping on our picture window intruded at last on the simple gathering of my peace, and I looked over at the smallest and most astonishing sight. A white moth, its spread no more than the width of two fingers, was fluttering against the pane. Had I ever seen a moth outdoors before on a March night? Its wings on the other side of the glass were as white as Melville's whale.

I crossed to the desk, picked up a flashlight, turned it on, and held it against the glass. The moth attached itself to the other side of the pane as though to absorb the small warmth offered by the bulb. I looked at its trembling wings with the respect one gives a true creature, whatever the size. Its black pupils, each comparable in diameter to the head of a pin, looked back at me with the same bulging intensity of expression one finds in the eyes of a deer or a lap dog, yes, I could have sworn the moth was staring back at me, creature to creature.

I slid my flashlight along the picture window and the moth followed the light. When I came to a casement that I could open, I hesitated. The prize was a moth, after all, not a butterfly. Like a maggot was its white body, and its antennae were not filaments, but brushes. I let it in all the same. There was such entreaty in that beating of wings.

Once inside, like a bird studying the place where it will alight, it circumnavigated the room before descending into a fold of Kittredge's pillow.

I was about to go back to my chair, but had the impulse to place my flashlight against the window again, and by the movement of its beam along the ground, there out in that silvery penumbra between the last of the light and the dark of the woods, I saw nothing less than the figure of a man. He darted so quickly behind a tree, however, that I, in my turn, stepped





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back quickly, and turned off the flash.

OMEGA-7 | It was peculiar. There was an unholy exhilaration about it. If I had felt oppressed for the last hour by the conviction that I was being watched, this much confirmation was relief: I began to gulp in whole swallows of breath as if a stocking had been removed from my head. Indeed, I was close to happy. I was also on the edge of unruly panic.

In childhood I had always thought of myself as the feckless son of a very brave man, and I could tell the story of my life by the attempts I have made to climb out of the pit. If you think of yourself as a coward, the rashest course usually proves to be wise. My father's Luger, captured by him during OSS days, and in his will bequeathed to me, was in a case in my closet. I could get it out and do a little reconnoitering.

I rebelled. I was hardly prepared to go into the woods. I would have to, yes, get ready. An occupation so exorbitantly professional as mine, obviously develops a few personal powers even when one is, oneself, far from extraordinary. On occasion, I could force my mind into preparing for a near impossible situation. Of course, this ability was a curiously exaggerated faculty. One could also have been a contest winner on one of those television shows where you had to find the answer to a riddle while hell was popping forth on the stage and the audience roared. To clear my mind and focus my will, I confess that I liked to use a certain text from the Book of Common Prayer.

Let me admit that the words were hardly said in prayer. If I now repeated to myself the Collect for Fridays—*Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you took away the sting of death: grant to us your*





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servants so to follow in faith where you have led the way, that we may at length fall asleep peacefully in you—I was trying not to shrive myself for battle so much as to return my agitations to the deep. Repeating this prayer, if need be, ten times, my prep school years would always appear before me, and the fatal-drowse-in-chapel, as we used to call it at St. Matthew's, would also return. I would "fall asleep peacefully" in someone, or in something, and awaken, after a five- or ten-second cut-out, to face in the direction my mind wished to follow. Every man to his own mnemonic! I came out of these ten seconds with the recognition that I must not sit beside Kittredge and keep guard until dawn. It might be prudent to sit in this chair and take care of my life, but it would lose my love. That is an outrageously romantic equation, yet I saw it as the logic of love—which usually reduces itself to a single equation. Love is outrageous. One must endanger oneself to preserve it—a likely reason why so few people stay in love. I was *obliged* to discover who the prowler might be.

I removed my father's Luger from its case and slipped a loaded 9mm magazine out of the side pocket, inserted the clip into the handle, drew back the slide, snapped it forward, heard the round go home to the breech. To the gun lover, that is a satisfying sound (and I was a gun lover at this moment). Next, I stepped to our bedroom door, opened it, locked it, pocketed the key, and weapon in hand, strolled down the hall.

My father used to say that the Luger was Germany's most dependable contribution to gracious living. In profile, his captured Luger is as handsome as Sherlock Holmes, and its heft in one's palm can make you feel like a good shot in much the way a fine horse will offer suggestions to your seat that you may yet become a good rider. I felt ready.

The Keep is a house with seven doors, a mark, we often say, of the luck it is ready to bestow. We have a front door on the old house, and a back one, as well as a side entrance for the Cunard (which gives on a stairway to the beach at low tide), a door at each end of the Camp, plus the pantry exit to the woodshed and a cellar hatch.

I took the pantry door. There was no illumination from nearby windows, and the wind was loud enough, I figured, to overpower any grating of the hinges or the bolt. So it proved.



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I emerged with no loud announcement.

Outside, the darkness was massive, a cavern. I took comfort that the ground was wet, my steps were stilled. I had not felt so alive (in just this way) since a sojourn near to fifteen years ago in Vietnam—in truth, I had not taken ten silent steps before I was back to whatever I learned on the few patrols where I went along with a platoon on a search-and-destroy. There is much to be said for feeling alert in one's toes and fingertips, in one's eyes, nostrils, ears, even to the taste of the air on one's tongue.

Yet, in the time I spent emerging from the open end of the shed, and slipping into the woods, it was evident that I was as likely to bump into some unknown party on guard as to slip up unheard on whoever might be observing our house. The night, as I say, was black, and the wind was strong. When it blew at its best, I could take ten quick strides and never hear my steps on the wet pine carpet, nor, for that matter, the whipping of a branch. So I saw soon enough that to learn anything, I would have to circle the house at a distance, then, every forty or fifty paces, work back to the lights. If sufficiently careful, I ought to be able to come up on anyone from behind, assuming, that is, that *they* were stationed in place. Or were they prowling like me? Did I have to watch my back? I traveled in circles more ways than one.

I must have been out for a full twenty minutes before I came across the first guard. Sitting on a stump was a man in a poncho with a walkie-talkie in his hand. I saw him from fifty feet away, his attention fixed on my front door, his body revealed in silhouette by the light above our entry, and his posture attentive, although not enormously so, no different from a hunter who has been waiting in a blind for a deer. By the posture of his body, I suspected that his assignment was to report on his walkie-talkie ~~so soon~~ as anyone was sighted.

I passed through a moment when I was tempted to shoot him. Raising the Luger, I lined up the dark object of his head, dramatically back-lit in my front sight, and knew I could do it—legally and spiritually. I can never remember feeling so sure of myself with a handgun; in truth, it was fifteen years since I had fired one in anger and that had been in Vietnam in the middle of a sudden and ferocious fire fight where everyone was shoot-



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ing off all they had, and I, as unbalanced and blind as any grunt on war-fever, emptied a .357 Magnum into a bush whose looks I did not like, although in contrast to the war movies I had seen, no Oriental with a dazed look tumbled out of the foliage, rather the bush was blasted away. Magnum force!

That had been combat mania laced with considerable funk (and pot!) and connected to little else in my life, but this impulse now came from the center of myself as cold and implacable as the desire to carry Kittredge down to the Vault. I felt—in a word—evil, and enjoyed it, and took pride in the way my hand did not quiver. I had never held a pistol as steadily in training. Yet I also knew it would not be wise to shoot him. He had to be part of a team. I would explode a situation I did not yet comprehend. Besides, the situation did not feel dangerous, not in these familiar woods, not now. The night seemed pendant, as if both of us, guard and myself, were waiting for a further event.

So I stepped back from that man with his walkie-talkie, and continued my tour around the house. I felt balanced, cool, dangerous to others, and attuned to the wet aromatic of the evergreens about me. In such a splendid state, I must have gone fifty paces around the larger perimeter I had drawn for myself before stealing in again toward the hub, but this time saw no one near the Camp, not by either door. On the next approach, however, moving in toward the Cunard where the beach stairs descended to the rock shelf, I could detect a bit of movement that seemed to belong more to a man than a shrub. Then I heard a poncho flap. The sound was as loud as a mainsail catching the wind. Another guard.

I could hardly discern him. He was but a darkness within other darkness. The Cunard, as described, projected in cantilever above the house to give a view of Blue Hill Bay. I was hidden at this moment in the inky invisibility of the rock shelf beneath the cantilever. To go forward could reveal me. I retreated therefore. I was hardly out from underneath, however, before a light went on in the long living room of the Cunard, and from my angle, I could look up through our picture window to see the head and shoulders of, a man I knew but could not yet name. I could swear all the same that he was good Langley kin. Yes, this was one of us.



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I returned to the woodshed, keeping my distance from the first guard. I was not in any particular fear for Kittredge. The stranger in the Cunard—familiar to me in that one quick look—had not appeared threatening so much as gravely concerned. Indeed, I was sufficiently sure of this perception to put the Luger in the drawer of an old cupboard in the pantry, as though everything would be set needlessly askew if I walked forward, gun in hand. The reconnaissance I had just undertaken in the woods, while of mixed returns for my ego (since it had been good to do it, but once done, of limited value), had succeeded nonetheless in honoring my anxiety. I had determined who the visitor was—the glimpse of his face had come into focus. He was a high official from the Office of Security, and I knew him. I knew him well. Arnie Rosen. Reed Arnold Rosen. Now, in the time I had consumed in coming back to the house, he had moved from the Cunard to the den, and it was there that I came in on him sitting in my favorite chair, smoking a pipe. Reed Arnold Rosen, once Arnie, then Ned, now *Reed* these days to friends and coworkers. I qualified, probably, as both. Arnie Rosen and I had gone through training together at the Farm, and seen much of each other soon after as assistants to Harlot. Was it twenty-seven years ago? Yes, I knew Reed and he knew me. It was just that by the measure of our careers, he had prospered more than myself.

All the same, I had an unholy impulse to use the old nickname, Arnie.

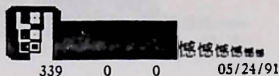
"Hello, Reed," I said.

"Harry, you're looking fit."

I knew I was not appearing fit in his eyes. "I'm a mess," I said, "but then it's wet in the boondocks."

He nodded. "I was out a little earlier." His three-piece suit hardly showed it—English worsted and a London tailor had taken him equably through the damp.

If human beings had pedigrees as finely nurtured as dogs, our best people (whether born as Scotch-Irish, Ukrainian, Italian, or Lithuanian) would have put the ethnicity behind—we look to be one breed. We are what our vocational environment has made us: American Intelligence. It grated on me a little that I, who belonged to a pretty good kennel, had, at this point, with



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my professional life awash (not to dwell on my muddled clothes), less of the look than Rosen. His neat, medium-sized body and close-cropped gray hair, short sharp nose, tight upper lip (which always looked as if it were being squeezed against his capped front teeth), even his silver-rimmed eyeglasses fit the gray suit he was wearing about the way a foxglove sits in the sconces of its stalk.

All the same, I was glad to see him. To find that my inquisitor (whom I must have been awaiting for months) was as civilized a top cop as old Ned Rosen, allowed me to feel—there is no end to the logic of these organizational matters—back in the Company again.

"It was a bit of a jaunt to get to your woods," he said.

How he had improved since the old days. When we trained together, Rosen, who had been Phi Beta Kappa at Columbia, Mensa, et cetera, had also been—in a word—adenoidal. His nasal intelligence kept boring forward. He was a fellow to be rejected by in-groups before they even formed.

Now, he was married to a nice gray Episcopalian lady with whom, in fact, I had once had a memorable date in Montevideo, and he had obviously learned a lot from her. The nasality had metamorphosed into the resonance of a high government official.

"Yes," he said, "you look damp, and I'm not dry."

Enough of the warm-up, however.

"Did you telephone Kittredge tonight?" I asked.

He took his pause, more in decorum than caution. "About Hugh Montague?"

"Yes."

"Harry, I didn't telephone her. I brought the news."

"When?"

"A while ago."

He must have arrived not long after I had made my call from the Bell Telephone icebox on the coast road. So he had been here when I came back. His walkie-talkie people had heard me approaching through the woods, had heard, conceivably, how my teeth were chattering with cold as I tried to find the key for my door. They would have reported this to the small button he kept in his ear.





HARLOT'S GHOST | 61

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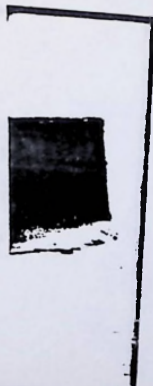
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I got up to stir the fire and was able to verify that, yes, in his right ear was a buff-colored earpiece.

"What have you been doing since you arrived?" I asked.

"Trying to think."

"Where were you doing this?"

"Well, for the most part—in one of the guest bedrooms."

He took a puff on his pipe.

"Are those your ladies-in-waiting outside?"

"One would hope so."

"I counted two."

"In fact," said Reed, "there are three of us out there."

"All for me?"

"Harry, it's a complicated business."

"Why don't you invite them in?" I asked. "We have other guest rooms."

He shook his head. "My men," he said, "are prepared to wait."

"Expecting more people?"

"Harry, let's not play ping-pong. I have to discuss a situation which is *out of hand*."

That meant no one at Langley had a clue what to do next.

The tour I had made, Luger in fist, was still working like a spansule, calming to anxiety. I felt as if my wits had returned. Clear and overt danger was the obvious prescription for my spiritual malformations.

"Ned," I asked, "would you like a drink?"

"Do you keep Glenlivet?"

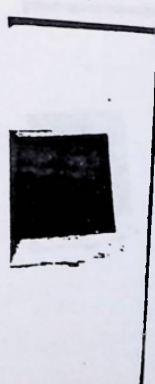
"We do."

He chose to go on about its merits. That was annoying. I did not need to hear any of the palaver he had picked up while motoring about Scotland and its distilleries one summer vacation with his gray Scotch bride. Withdrawing a bottle from the den cupboard, I served our Glenlivet neat—screw him if after all that praise he secretly wanted ice. Then I said, "Why are you here?"

I could see he wanted to enjoy the fireplace and the Scotch a little longer.

"Yes," he said, "we have to get to it."

"I'm honored that they sent you," I told him.





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"I may be dishonored in the morning," he replied. "This trip is on me."

"Not authorized?"

"Not altogether. You see, I wanted to arrive quickly."

"Well," I said, "we won't be playing ping-pong, will we?"

It was out of character for him not to cover his delicate behind; no one knew better than Rosen that we can be the most paper-haunted bureaucracy of them all. So there are times when we pay a lot of attention to getting the right paper. We feel happier when unorthodox actions can be traced to a piece of the stuff. If, from time to time, we are obliged to move without a program, statute, directive, memo, or presidential finding, it is a naked feeling. Rosen had no paper.

"I hope you are prepared to get into it," he said.

"You can start up," I said.

As a way of assent, he gave a grin. Since he was keeping his pipe in his mouth, it resulted in a grimace. "Did Kittredge," he inquired, "provide any details about what she heard vis-à-vis Harlot?"

"I'm afraid my wife was not coherent."

"Harlot," said Rosen, "left his house three days ago, went out alone in his boat, which, as you may know, was not uncharacteristic of him. He was proud of his ability to skipper that boat solo, physical disability and all. But he did not return. This morning, the Coast Guard found the craft drifting, checked its registration, and called us. Would you believe it? The boat papers listed the Langley personnel office extension as the telephone number to ring for next of kin! Meanwhile, the body of a man in a considerable state of disrepair washed up on a mud-flat in Chesapeake Bay. Coast Guard was notified, and soon after my office was on the scene. Just before lunch today."

"I understand you're calling it a suicide."

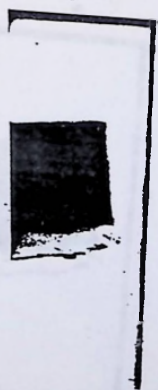
"We will probably call it that. Hopefully, the press could decide that's worth no more than an obituary."

"Is it murder?"

"Can't say. Not yet."

"How did you get here?" I asked. "Did you fly to Bar Harbor Airport?"

"In my plane. I have added a pilot's license to my small



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assortment of virtues."

"There's always something new to learn about you, Reed."

My praise, you would think, was edged, but he couldn't keep from showing his pleasure. Once after Richard Helms had rescued a few of Hugh Montague's less savory chestnuts from a Congressional inquiry, Harlot, in recognition of the debt, was quick to offer the Director a large compliment. "You, Dick," Harlot had said, "are so aptly named. One small craft after another to skipper through the fearful breeze." That was a little thick, I thought, but Helms, who looked as much to the point as an ice pick, and was certainly on guard around Harlot, still couldn't keep from beaming at such homage to his now masterly moniker. Later, Harlot remarked, "Depend on it, Harry, the vanity of the high officeholder never bottoms out."

Ergo, I had gone my way to put Rosen on automatic feed. I was thinking to catch him while he was munching.

"As you were flying up here," I inquired, "you didn't stop off in Bath, Maine, did you?"

He went so far as to take his pipe out of his mouth. "Most certainly not." He took his pause. "I must say," he added, "the thought occurred to me. We *are* on to your friend Chloe."

"Was it the FBI who paid her a visit tonight?"

"Not by way of us."

"How about the DEA?"

"Ditto. I could swear."

"Who, then, ransacked her trailer?"

"What?" He seemed genuinely surprised.

"She called me. In panic. By her description, it was a thoroughgoing, insulting, highly professional job."

"I'm at a loss."

"Why are you interested in her?" I asked.

"I don't know that I am. Is she relevant?"

"Ned, if we are to speak of my so-called *friend Chloe*, work with the facts. I happen to have coffee with her sometimes when I pass through Bath. And Chloe and I have no carnal knowledge of one another. Not at all. But, Ned, I'm desirous to know"—yes, the Glenlivet (after the Bushmills, after the Luger) was having an unanticipated effect; the good Scotch was making me testy—"yes, tell me, pal, what the hell has Chloe got to do with any-



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thing? She's just a waitress."

"Maybe yes, maybe no."

I was coming around the buoy a bit late. "Did you *opera lovers* tap the phone here in this den? I did have a phone call from her tonight. So what?"

He held up his hand. I realized I was too angry. Was guilt getting into my voice? "Ease off, Harry," he said, "ease off. Presumably your phone call with Chloe is on tape one place or another. I just didn't have the means to tap into you directly. Nor," he added, "the desire. I didn't come here to strap you to the table and whip out the proctoscope."

"Although you wouldn't mind a conversation in depth."

"I'd like to go equal to equal."

"Do you know what is in the back of my mind right now?" I asked.

"The High Holies."

Rosen was showing how unequal we were after all.

"Reed," I told him, "I don't know all that much about the High Holies."

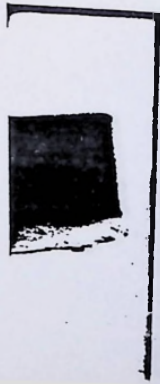
"Not by yourself, you don't." But we both knew: much that was meaningless to me might be a gift for him. He sipped the last of his shot glass, and handed it over. "Let me drink a little more of this splendid Scotch," he said, "and I'll get into kilts."

I managed to smile. It took a considerable rearranging of the local passions in my mouth.

"This has to be a hellish occasion for you," he said. "Whether you believe it or not, it's a hellish occasion for me."

Well, now we were talking about the same thing. He must have some idea of how much paper I had carried out of Langley. I had an impulse to tell him it had not proved bothersome to that complex fellow, my conscience. In truth, it was amazing. While there might be a day when I would have to pay up on these accounts, I virtually looked forward to the occasion. I have a lot to tell you. Ned, I nearly told him now, of my feelings in this matter: I feel righteous.

Instead, I chose to be silent. Rosen said, "Harry, you've been mad as a boil for years. Maybe with reason. When a marriage breaks up, I think one has to say, 'Don't judge. Only God can apportion the fault.' We're all married to the Agency. If





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you're ready for a separation, I'm not the one to sit in judgment. Not on you. Over the years, you've done work that would put us all to shame. Such bold and well-turned stuff."

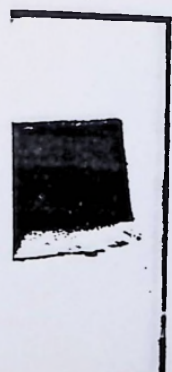
I was trying to conceal my unprecedented pleasure. "Bold and well-turned," had left me outrageously agog. Just as vain as a high official.

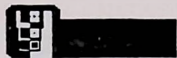
Rosen followed up by saying, "I'll tell you in confidence that whatever lifting you've done, and I believe we have pretty good track on these rampages by now, still, fellow—" his voice had never been more resonant—"on my word, the sins are venial."

It was his way of telling me to cooperate. Rosen over the years must have supplied Harlot with a good deal of stuff the Office of Security preferred to keep for themselves. Venial sins went on all the time. Information slipped through the cracks between State and us, Defense and us, NSC—yes, especially NSC—and us: we were merely good Americans who had invested in *Leak Gardens*.

Mortal sins were another matter. Mortal sins delivered papyrus to the Sovietskys, an incomparably less humorous business. While Rosen could not be absolutely certain that I was on the lower end of the venial-mortal scale, he was nonetheless making covert promises. Resignation from the service might be in order, he had all but said, rather than trial and/or discharge. Obviously, he needed my help. The questions surrounding Hugh Montague's death were going to be orders of magnitude more vital than any of my peccadillos.

Perhaps it was just as well that I would have Ned for my interlocutor rather than some high-ranking Security baboon who would not know how many generations of Hubbards it had taken to shape the dear, shabby quiddities of the Keep.





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OMEGA-8 | The light from the fireplace was reflected in his eyeglasses. I even saw the logs flicker as I spoke.

"Let's take it for granted," I said, "that my separation from the service will be equitable." I do not know if my voice sounded inadmissably smug in its assessment, or if Rosen had been playing me with a well-chosen fly, but now I could feel him taking in slack.

His thin lips took on the severity of a bureaucrat about to land his trout.

"Let us assume," he said, "that concerted cooperation will permit separation on equitable terms so far as relevant guidelines allow."

Not everyone could speak bureaucratese. I nodded scornfully. I realized I was drunk. That didn't happen often these days no matter how much I drank, but you do get to feel competitive about your command of the tongue after more than twenty-five years in the government.

"Subject," I told him, "to appropriate conjunction, we will engineer a collateral inquiry out of the competing contingencies."

I said this to get that highly domiciled little smile off his face, but he merely looked sad. I realized that Rosen was as full of liquor as myself. We had been running a small rapids on the great river of booze. Now the drop was over. The river was calm.

He sighed. I thought he was about to say, "How could you have done it?" but instead he murmured, "We're not ready to make deals."

"Then where are we?"

"I'd like your overview."

I took a sobering swallow of Scotch. "Why?"

"Maybe I need it. We're in the middle of a disaster. Sometimes you see things more clearly than me."

"All right," I said.

"I mean it," he said. I began to think he did.

"What do we have?" I asked. "You are holding a body that is Harlot's body?"

"Yes," he said, but reluctantly, as if ready to deny his own



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affirmative.

"I assume," I said, and I took another sip of Scotch before bringing my voice down this gravel path, "the remains are damaged and swollen by water."

"The body, ostensibly, belongs to Harlot."

We were silent. I had known it would not be routine to speak of Harlot's death in any fashion, yet was still surprised at the engorgement of my throat. Sorrow, anger, confusion, and a hint of hysteria at my own confusion, were all groping alike for a safe spot in my larynx. I discovered that it helped to look at the fire. I studied a log as it glowed into incandescence before collapsing softly upon itself, and I began to mourn Harlot—along with all else! Yet mortality, we learn from every sermon, is the dissolution of all matter, yes, all our forms flow down to the sea, and Harlot's death was entering the universe. So, too, did my throat feel less impeded.

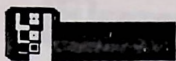
I discovered I did want to talk about Harlot's death. No matter how much had taken place this evening—or was it precisely because of all that had happened?—I felt as if I had finally retreated to the middle of myself, to the clear logical middle of myself, and if my emotional ends had been consumed, so was the middle stronger. If drunk ten minutes ago, I now felt sober, but then drunkenness is the abdication of the ego, and mine had just surfaced like a whale. I felt a considerable need to recognize all over again just how sane I could be, which is to say, how lucid, how logical, how sardonic, how superior to everybody's weaknesses, including my own. Did Rosen look for analysis? I would give it to him. Something of the old days was coming back to me—the sense the two of us used to share of being Harlot's best and brightest. And certainly his most competitive. It did not matter any longer how tired I was, I felt tireless in the center of my brain.

"Ned, the first question is whether it's murder or suicide."

He nodded.

To myself I thought: Suicide could only mean that Harlot had been playing for large stakes and lost. The corollary was that the High Holies were mortally disloyal to the Company, and I was, therefore, in no small trouble.

"Keep going."



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"If, however, Harlot was murdered," I said, and stopped again. Greater difficulties commenced here. I chose an old CIA saw: "You don't lance a boil," I told him, "without having some idea where the drainage will go."

"Of course," said Rosen.

"Well, Reed, if Harlot suffered a hit, do the sluiceways point east or west?"

"I don't know. I don't know whether to look for the King Brothers or closer to home." He exhaled from the tension of having carried this by himself all these hours.

"It can't be the King Brothers," I said.

He tapped the stem of his pipe against his teeth. It would be the next thing to mutual kamikaze if we and the KGB ever began killing each other's officers. By unspoken covenant we didn't. Third World agents, perhaps, and an occasional European, but not each other. "No, not the Russians," I said, "unless Harlot was working a double game with them."

Rosen sighed.

"On the other hand," I proposed, "it could be us."

"Would you expatiate on that?" Rosen asked.

"Harlot was riding one hypothesis fairly hard. He had decided there was an enclave among us using our most classified information as a guide to buy, sell, and invest all over the world. By his estimate, these covert finances are larger by now than our entire budget for Operations."

"Are you saying, then, that Harlot was killed by Agency people?"

"They stood to lose billions. Maybe more."

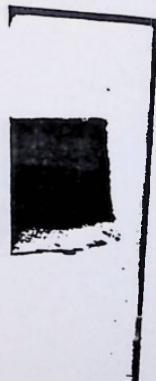
I was partial to the thesis. For Harlot's sake and for my own. If he was the good sentinel on guard against massive internal corruption, then to have worked with him might cast an honorable light on me.

Rosen, however, shook his head. "It's not productive to go in this direction yet," he said. "You don't know the worst-case scenario. There's a hell of a roadblock in front of your thesis."

I poured a little more Scotch for both of us.

"You see," said Rosen, "we are not, in fact, sure it's Harlot's remains. Not what washed up in the Chesapeake."

"Not sure?" I could hear the echo in my voice.





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"We have what *purports* to be Montague's body. But the labs can't give 100-percent probability to the cadaver. Although the specificities are respectable. Good fit for height and weight. On his third finger, left hand, a St. Matthew's ring. The face, however, is no help at all." Rosen's pale gray eyes, usually unremarkable, now looked awfully bright behind his eyeglasses.

"I couldn't get myself to tell Kittredge," he continued. "The face and head were blown off. Shotgun muzzle pressed against the palate. Probably a sawed-off shotgun."

I did not wish to contemplate this image longer than I had to. "What about Hugh's back?" I asked.

"There is a severe back injury on the body. No perambulative functions would be possible." He shook his head. "We can't be positive, however, that it's the Montague injury."

"Surely you have Harlot's X-rays on file?"

"Well, Harry, you know Harlot. He had all records transferred from his hospital treatment center to us. He would never allow information about himself to repose anywhere out of the domain."

"What do his X-rays tell you?"

"That's the roadblock," said Rosen. "The X-rays can't be found." He took his pipe out of his mouth and scrutinized the progress of the char in his bowl. "We have a first-rate headache."

OMEGA-9 | I could anticipate Rosen's next question: Have you, Harry Hubbard, removed Harlot's X-rays from the file?

The trouble was, I couldn't give an answer. I had no recollection of ever bringing anything to Harlot from his medical file.





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My powers of on-demand recollection, after thirty years of drinking, could show a gaping hole or two. It was not impossible that I had forgotten.

More likely someone else had done the lifting. I could have been merely one of a number of mules carrying bales of papyrus from Langley out to Harlot. For that matter, the loss of the X-rays could be attributed to FMWP—pronounced as foam-whip—our in-house acronym for *Files Mislaid Within Parameters*. The CIA had been expanding for close to four decades in spite of—or was it due to?—foam-whip. One could never assume a missing file to have been filched in mortal sin. The removal was more likely to be venial—plucked to protect some officer's self-interest, or misassigned to the wrong department on its way back to the nest, or, for that matter, a young file clerk, distracted over a dubious romance, could have plunked the papers into the wrong folder, the wrong box, or now that we were computerized, down the chute on an off-key. The user-friendly computers employed by our common folk were as ready to take you off the road as the steering wheel of a fat old four-door sedan.

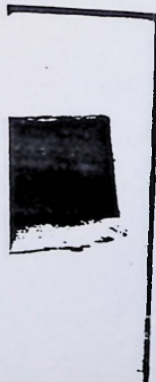
In short, Harlot's X-ray files were not now available.

"We're also having some trouble locating his fingerprints." Rosen now told me. "Although that may not matter. The fish got to the ends of his fingers. Which is interesting. There is a substance, some equivalent of catnip, but solely for fish, that could have been painted on the fingertips. Which got the catfish nibbling in the desired place. On the other hand, fish do nibble at extremities. So it could be for natural reasons."

He dipped into an attache case he had sitting beside him on the floor, and handed over two eight-by-ten glossies respectively of a left hand wearing a ring, and a right hand. "Would this be recognizable?" Perhaps it was the pallor of the black-and-white tones in the photograph, but the hands could have belonged to anyone, they were identifiable only as the puffed-up mitts of a man who had been in water much too long. And the tips of the fingers were indeed frayed to the bone.

"I asked Kittredge if she could make any identification from this, but she became distraught," Rosen said.

Yes, distraught. The moment when I begged her to let me into the bedroom, came back in all its rags of woe. How she must





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have suffered at the sight of those enlargements. Harlot's hands—once so deft. Kittredge's grief became a little more comprehensible to me. It was—cruel paradox—that her torment had nothing to do with mine: her suffering had a separate existence. This occurred to me in the way that a physicist might encounter a new and offensive proposition in his field: it did not matter how much I loved Kittredge, no guarantee was returned that she could love me. That was the offensive proposition. Did Einstein, facing the quantum theory and a universe of chance, feel any more of an unholy stir?

I am a professional, however. It is the operative word. It was time again to remind myself. One's body must be in the appointed place. Hung over or well-rested; friendly or boiling with bile; loyal or treacherous; fit for the task or conceivably incompetent; one is, nonetheless, a professional; one shuts off the part of one's mind that is not appropriate to the task. If what is left does not have enough to manage the job, one is still professional. One has shown up for work.

"Harry," said Rosen, "not all of the face is lost."

I could hardly follow him. Then I did. "What was left for us?"

"The right lower jaw. All the teeth on that side are absent. Except for the last two molars. That checks out. Harlot used to wear a bridge on his right lower jaw anchored to the same two molars."

"How do you know about this bridge?"

"Well, my friend, we may not have his general medical records, but the dental file was found. On those X-rays, one of the two molars shows a small gold inlay. So does the cadaver. In fact, the filling on the dead man matches astonishingly well to the Montague X-rays."

"Astonishingly well? Why not assume you have Hugh Montague's funeral to prepare for?"

"Because it doesn't feel right to me." He put out his hands in apology as if he had been debating this through the afternoon with technicians in the laboratory. I realized he might be alone in his suspicions. "I can't help it," he said. "I don't like the product."

He filled his pipe and lit it. I did not care to speak while he





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was refueling. I suppose I have been annoyed by pipe smokers all my working life. We do not have as many now in the Company as in Allen Dulles' day when the Director's old Dunhill became part of the role model for a good many of us, but how many of my hours have been spent inhaling a colleague's pipe?

"Can you tell me why," he asked at last, "it doesn't feel all that good?"

"It's the only path through the evidence," I said. He knew it. I knew it. Harlot had taught us: Partial evidence which leads to but one conclusion is to be distrusted. Categorically distrusted.

"I think," he said, "that a cosmetic deception may have been brought off."

"Can we put the ball back on the playing field?" I asked, and had the passing thought—my mind seemed afflicted now by passing thoughts—that it was, after all, amazing how so many of us still spoke the way advertising people used to carry on twenty and thirty years ago. I think we are equal in some way—we, too, may not know whether an assertion is true or egregiously fraudulent. Run it up the mast and see if it waves. Many of our ventures were dependent on metaphor.

I digress, but I did not wish to engage the enormity of Rosen's suggestion. There was no alternative, however. I tasted my Scotch. I said, "Ned, are you proposing that a dental technician worked on another man's mouth skillfully enough to convert those two molars into facsimiles of Harlot's? And did it in advance of his death?"

"Not impossible." Rosen was excited. Harlot might be over the horizon, but the game was before him. "This," he said, "is what we have so far. Hugh Montague's dental X-rays were done a couple of years ago. At his age, teeth grind down and shift. So it isn't as if someone had to find a man of the exact age and size who also had two molars identical to Harlot's. You just need molars that are *close*. Obviously there would be no great problem in producing a precise copy of the gold inlay."

"Would the dentist be working for the King Brothers?"

"Yes," he said, "it would have to be. We could lock in on some person whose physical specifications are near enough to be satisfactory, but we could hardly deal with the rest of the job."





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I postulate that we have been presented with a highly worked-up KGB special."

"Are you," I asked, "really claiming that they found some seventy-year-old Soviet prisoner and proceeded, after much dental work including possibly the extraction of all the other teeth on that half of the lower jaw, to go ahead and very carefully break the old fellow's spine in just the right place, and then mend him back to health, smuggle him into this country, take him down to Harlot's boat, carefully shoot off his head to leave no more than the two facsimile molars, and then consign him to Chesapeake Bay long enough to puff up the rest of the remains, while they hang around through it all to be able to nudge him back to shore? No," I said, answering my own question, "I'd rather believe Harlot is dead, and you are holding the remains."

"Well," he replied, "it *would* be a demanding operation. Even for the KGB. With all their patience."

"Come," I said. "It's worthy of Felix Dzerzhinsky."

Rosen stood up and poked the fire. "They would never go to such lengths," he said, "unless the stakes were very large. Let's go back to the worst-case scenario. Suppose Harlot is in the hands of the King Brothers?"

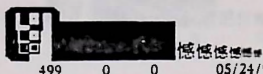
"In the hands of the King Brothers and alive?"

"Alive and *happy*," said Rosen. "Happy and on his way to Moscow."

I certainly didn't wish to give Rosen any help at this point. Where could this thesis leave me? Yet, my mind with all its conditioned reflexes for twisting an hypothesis until it broke or took on form—we treated hypotheses not unlike the way Sandy Calder used to bend wire—now bent Rosen's line of thinking into the next turn, and did so, I suspect, for no better reason than to improve on his scenario. The need for superior acumen is also an uncontrollable passion. "Yes," I said, "what if Harlot is alive and happy and on his way to Moscow, and doesn't want us to be able to conclude whether he's alive or dead?"

I had gained a step on Rosen. We did not even have to speak of it. For Harlot to defect was as huge a one-man disaster as the CIA could conceive. Even Bill Casey might recognize that it was larger than Nicaragua. Yet if it took a good many qualified people a year or more, we could still assess the damage—call it





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the melt-down—of the mess that would leave us in. If, however, we did not even know whether he was actually dead or, to the contrary, was educating the King Brothers about *us*—which would be the education of the century!—then we were condemned to live in a habitat where the keys would fit the locks until they didn't. This had Harlot's signature. It would be exactly in his style to leave us a tainted corpse. How often had he instructed Rosen and myself in the principle. "Americans have to have answers," he told me once. "The inability to reply to a question drives us mad, and Russians look for control before they even have the answer. Both courses breed the same unmanageable anxiety. Find the answer! Neither CIA nor KGB can tolerate ambiguity. It's to our advantage, therefore, in many an operation, to leave behind just a bit of our spoor—just a trace. The spoor will consume a thousand hours of investigation for every hour they gain by the product. Not at all routine to bring off, Harry, but demoralizing to the opponent."

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Rosen and I sat in the aura of the fire. Even as a silence is composed of small sounds—the gossip, to put it so, of unseen events—so did the hearth prove equal to a blazing forest. I was giving attention to the transmogrifications in burning wood. Universes curved toward one another, universes exploded; ash thickened from a membrane to a shroud. I could hear each fiber spit its curse into the flames.

Rosen was slumped morosely in my favorite chair. I thought of a joke that had made the rounds of CIA just before the expected summit meeting in 1960 between Eisenhower and Khrushchev, the one that never took place because Gary Powers'



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U-2 plane was shot down over Russia. Khrushchev said to Eisenhower, "I love you."

"Why do you love me?" asked Eisenhower.

"Because you are my equal. You are the only equal I got in the whole world."

Rosen was my equal. Harlot was a manifest of the Lord, and we had known him together. "How could he have done it?" Rosen exclaimed.

"I know," I murmured, which is to say, I did not.

"He literally carried me into Christianity," said Rosen. "I converted because of Hugh Montague. Do you know what it means for a Jew to convert? You feel like a Judas to your own people."

I tried to search my starched soul—starched, I had to recognize, in its likes and dislikes—to determine whether I had been over-hard on Rosen. I had always assumed he converted to advance certain professional pursuits. Did I do him an injustice? Had I remained censorious over all these years merely because I had once felt so superior to him? In the old days of slavish training at the Farm, our group of *stunts* (as we called ourselves, in comparison to Marine Corps grunts) used to look upon Rosen as a bagel-baby from the middle-class purlieus of the Bronx. I, however, used to be grateful he was there. Luck of the draw, Rosen and I had been assigned to a training platoon with an undue allotment of heavy-duty stunts. Half of them could climb a twelve-foot wall somewhat faster than I could look at it. With Rosen present, they could laugh at him instead of me. That is a good fellow to have around. Of course, they might also have laughed because he was their token Jew doing gentile's work, and I think that burned his soul. I know I suffered with him, since I had something like an eighth of Jewish blood by way of my mother, just enough never to know quite what to do about it. At this moment, however, Rosen was my only equal in the world. Had Harlot defected? How could one ever seize the meaning of that? As soon plunge one's hand into water and seize a minnow.

Sitting before the fire, I was living with the memory of Harlot as he used to look in full health, not yet fifty, equal in trim to his mustache. Over how many years at Langley had I sat next to him while a projector threw up the faces of KGB men on a



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screen? The opponent looks astral when magnified so. I had seen faces four feet high whose light of eye seemed to go inward as if one were shining a flare down the dark halls of their deeds. So did Harlot's face appear to me now in the fireplace, four feet high and full of force.

Out of the silence, Rosen asked, "Do you think it would be possible to talk to Kittredge?"

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Can it wait?" I asked.

He took his time considering this.

"I suppose it can."

"Ned, she knows nothing about the High Holies."

"She does not?" He seemed surprised.

It was the quality of surprise that disturbed me. He seemed at an odd loss.

"You find that peculiar?" I asked.

"Well, she has been in Washington a good deal lately to see Harlot."

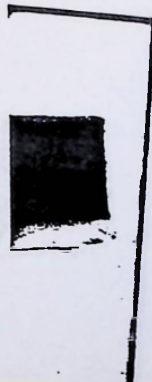
"Just old chums," I said.

Like wrestlers whose bodies have become so slippery with exertion that they can no longer hold a grip, so were we at this moment sliding around each other.

"Do you really believe he told her anything?" I asked.

I had had no inkling she was seeing Harlot. Every few weeks she would leave me to visit her father, Rodman Knowles Gardiner, now approaching the magical age of ninety, magical I say because such common events of the day as slumber, evacuation, and alimentation could be accomplished only by charms, spells, and the endlessly repetitive rituals of the old. "What did you say your name is, girl? . . . oh, yes, Kittredge . . . that's a nice name . . . that's the name of my daughter. What do you say your name is, girl?"

I had once been on a visit to Oneonta, New York, Dr. Gardiner's birthplace, and now the site of his abode in a rest home. That solitary occasion was sufficient for me. There were always enough tolls to pay in marriage without the drear surcharge of watching a senile father-in-law whom one has never liked nor been liked much by, as he takes an endless meander



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through the last of his time. Somewhere in the reservoirs of aged animal cunning, I believe old Dr. Gardiner was trying to decide just which of the seven doors of death he would choose to go through. Numbers can be as ambivalent as disturbed beauties, and none more so than seven, the seven doors of the Keep for good luck, and the seven doors of death, or, at least, that is how I saw it: termination by such natural causes as cancer, heart attack, stroke, hemorrhage, suffocation, infection, and despair. I speak like a medievalist, but not wholly in jest—it did seem natural to me to be able over the course of a slow demise, to be able to choose one's exit, to perish, for example, by way of the liver or the lungs, the brain or the bowels. So, no, I did not wish to watch Dr. Gardiner continue to deliberate before the too-patient doors of death while his daughter had to cross those great reaches of apathy between one quotidian burp and the next in a very old man, five senses just about gone, the sixth weaker than ever.

I commiserated in spirit with her each weekend she was away, and was grateful she had not requested me to go along nor even suggested that she really needed my company for so dreary a voyage. (Mt. Desert, Maine, to Oneonta, New York, is, by any mode of travel, a time-squandering trek!) And I, in my turn, loved her while she was gone, missed her, and on the one or two occasions I had profited by her absence to take a trip to Bath, felt such guilt over Chloe as to put the profit on Kittredge's side; never did I feel more devoted to my wife than after biting into the wild garlic of treachery. No wonder I never sniffed it on her. Not if I was eating of it myself!

Now, however, her telephone calls came back to me. She was the one who always rang in from Oneonta—"It's easier that way"—but, then, she did not phone that much. What, after all, was there to talk about—the lack of change in her father's condition?

At this point, I could keep, however, from unpleasant questions no longer. Was she seeing Harlot because her love for him was ineradicable? Or was it from pity? No. She would not make fortnightly visits, full of matrimonial deceit, for the sake of pity. Was she, then, part of the High Holies and did not share the fact with me because Harlot did not want either of us to know of the



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other's participation? (Unless she did know—another question!) I felt like some rebellious slave caught in the building of the pyramids, each new question a heavy stone laying a further cruelty on my back: for what is cruelty but pressure upon the piece of flesh that aches the most, even as confusion is intolerable to a tired mind. I would throw down all the stones. I could not tolerate another question. "If you wish," I said to Rosen, "I'll go upstairs for Kittredge."

He shook his head. "Let's wait a minute. I want to be sure we're ready."

"Why, what now?"

"Can we look at our case again? From the viewpoint that it may be Harlot's body after all."

I sighed. I sighed truly. We were not so different from two midwives examining the birth of a monster—to wit, a large and ugly obsession. What is obsession but the inability to know whether the strange object that has just entered our lives is A or Z, good or evil, true or false? Yet it is certainly there, and right before us, an inescapable gift from the beyond.

"I don't think it's Harlot's body," I said.

"Just take up the possibility," he said. "Please."

"Which mode? Murder? Suicide?" I must have barked this forth.

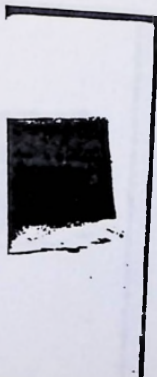
"Suicide seems dubious to me. On the facts," said Rosen.

"He was used to swinging himself around the boat by the use of his arms, but, still, he would have had to get into position on the railing without the aid of the lower spine and thighs. I believe it would have required holding on to a stay with one hand, while firing the sawed-off shotgun with the other. Then he would have had to fall over backward into the water. Why commit suicide from so awkward a position?"

"In order not to mess up the boat with your blood."

"That's a telling point. We could move from a 10-percent possibility of suicide to 20 percent."

"Every bit helps," I said. I was wretched. The drinks had turned on me again. I could feel the first warnings issue from another monster. Once or twice a year, no more, I would come down with a prodigious headache, royal cousin to a migraine, which would leave me next day with a short-term case of amne-





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sia—I would be unable to remember the last twenty-four hours. Some such storm seemed to be mounting now in the tropics of my brain. Tropic of Cerebrum. Tropic of Cerebellum. "The key thing, Arnie," I said, "is to keep your medulla oblongata clean."

"Harry, you're a class act. It's what you have to offer. Please don't go off on tangents."

"The English," I said, "have one test for vulgarity. It is: Do you descend the steps properly? Glenlivet, old pal?" I poured the Scotch. Screw the oncoming headache. Some hurricanes blow out to sea. I took the drink in two nips, filled my shot glass again. "All right. Murder. Murder by our people."

"Don't dismiss the KGB."

"No, let's talk of murder by our good people. It's been on your mind; hasn't it?"

"I keep coming back to what you said," Rosen now told me.

Yes, I could feel how real it had been for him ever since I said it. "Billions," I said. "Somebody who stands to lose a billion bucks and more."

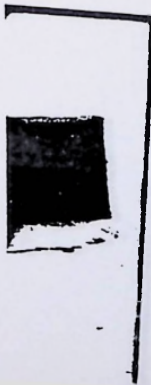
"When the sums of money are that huge, individuals don't get killed," Rosen said.

"Not individuals. Indians. Twenty or forty Indians. All gone." Was I thinking of Dorothy Hunt?

Something had happened, however, to Rosen. I thought he was having an outsize reaction to my last remark, until I realized someone was speaking to him from a walkie-talkie outside. His right hand pressed against the buff-colored ear plug and he nodded several times, then reached into his breast pocket, pulled out a black wireless microphone the size of a fountain pen and said, "Are you certain?" listened, then said, "Okay, out."

Now, Ned started to speak to me. His voice was not merely small in volume, but close to inaudible. He had begun to rattle the stem of his pipe against his whiskey glass in a disconcerting tattoo, a time-honored method for jamming any state-of-the-art electronics that might be tapping into the room.

Why, however, had he begun to do it now? It seemed likely to me that one of the guards out in the rain would have brought along additional electronic gear to detect any unscheduled approaches. Rosen had just been fed an alert. That seemed the simplest explanation for his behavior. Certainly his voice



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emerged in a thin whistle as if weighty forces had descended on his chest. Finally, his speech became so impoverished that he took out a notebook, wrote a sentence on it, held it up to me to read, then threw the paper in the fire.

"There is one man I can think of," Ned Rosen had written, "who has acquired the kind of fortune you name while working with us. However, he's not on board anymore."

I stood up to poke the logs. I felt timeless in my heart. Each beat of blood seemed to take its great and deliberate pause. I could feel the bellows of my lungs on their rise and on their fall. The confirmation of an hypothesis is one of the richest emotions left to our modern temper.

There was one man Ned could name, but he was not about to. His breath would not permit it. The hound of fear was in his lungs. And I could not name the man, not yet. My memory bore too much resemblance to those old brass tubes which once carried the cash and change for one's purchase up and down floors in department stores. The name might be already inserted in its tube and on its way, but, oh, my brain!—there were floors and floors to climb.

Then the name of the man did come to me, and sooner than expected. There was an undeniable pop-out in my head.

I reached for Rosen's note pad. "Are you thinking of our old friend on the Farm?" I wrote.

"PHENOMENAL!" Rosen printed in capital letters.

"Can it really be Dix Butler?" I wrote.

"How long since you've seen him?" asked Rosen aloud.

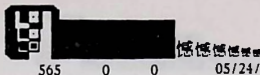
"Ten years."

He picked up the pad. "Have you ever been to Thyme Hill?"

"No," I said aloud, "but I've heard of it."

Rosen nodded, threw the page into the fire, and as if fatigued by the weight of this transaction, lay back in his chair.

I wondered at his travail. It is an odd word, but I think appropriate. He was reacting as if engaged in hard labor. It occurred to me that he must be carrying more than one full weight of anxiety. Until now, however, he had not shown the burden. Not until now. The significance of the three men in the woods redefined itself. They were not there for me. They were waiting for someone to arrive.



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Rosen sat up, nodded as if to assure me that all was well—what was well?—and then removed a silver pill box from his breast pocket, took out one white pill so small I assume it was nitroglycerine for his heart, and lay it under his tongue with a certain tenderness as if he were handing a small, carefully trimmed morsel of food to a pet. Then he closed his eyes to absorb it.

Probably he had been waiting for Dix Butler all night. Why else would he write: PHENOMENAL!

PRIMITIVE, I should have replied. Who was to say we do not receive messages from each other without signing the receipt? Had I begun to think of Dix Butler because Rosen was preoccupied with him?

We sat there, each to his own, and who could know what was shared? *Millions of creatures walk the earth unseen.* The interval of silence lengthened once more.

OMEGA-11 | I could sense myself raising a barrier against every fear that Rosen was communicating. I needed none of that. I had to be able to think about Butler. There was more than enough to contemplate. Butler had always been the most impressive man, physically speaking, of any group you found him in. He was powerful: he was—no other word—handsome. In training, instructors used to tell him that he had come to the wrong place, he should have taken his whack at Hollywood. He didn't disagree. His arrogance was ready to agree. He had, after all, given up professional football after two seasons of injuries (linebacker, fourth-round draft, Washington Redskins) to join CIA. At the Farm, we had been assigned to the same group of thirty, and he



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had, of course, been a good distance ahead of us on all physical levels. Since he was also intelligent, he went on to blaze a career trail in the Company. I had run with Dix Butler in Berlin in 1956, and saw him in Miami in 1960 when Howard Hunt and I were helping to train exile Cubans for the Bay of Pigs, and I had an adventure or two with Dix in southern Florida in 1962 when the local Cuban community was riddled with Fidelista spies. One of our jobs was to weed them out. Questioning suspects, Butler was not above using the toilet bowl to prime a confession. "It's the condign procedure for that kind of Cubano," he said. "Different chokes for different folks."

Now, I was attempting to recall what I had heard about him over the last ten years. He had left the Company and gone into business for himself, several kinds of business. That much I knew, not much more. If the gossip in large corporations is analogous to a river, then our whispering gallery is an underground river. Sometimes it even reaches the surface and talk flows freely among us about the marital difficulties of colleagues, or of a caper in Kinshasa that crashed so badly they were still scraping the egg yolk off the safe-house walls. But we knew when not to talk. Then the stream went into a cave and did not come out.

Dix Butler cut his swath through the Company and came back from Vietnam a legend. After which, he gave his resignation to CIA, and made a fortune. Envy alone would have been sufficient cause to talk about him forever, but we didn't. We weren't too sure of what we were talking about. The news received could be naught but cover. He purported to be detached from us; he could be doing contract work: God knows what we really had him doing. Talk was, therefore, *sensitive*, just as sensitive as a tooth that will strike up a spasm if touched. So we were silent. We were tribal. Out in the great prairie (of the common-folk cafeteria at Langley) where the gossip blew, we knew to distinguish the north wind from the south.

It was acceptable, however, to speak in general terms of how successful he had become. He had purchased a bluegrass horse farm some hundred miles into Virginia, and raised Appaloosas there, or, at least, the stud-farm equipage working for him did, and Thyme Hill expanded over the years. One heard



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of ten thousand acres more often now than of one thousand acres, and once I listened to talk of a training center for mercenaries somewhere in his trees. Ten thousand acres, went the argument, was fifteen square miles, just about the size of Camp Peary, our old Farm. It was a weak argument. There might be a few of his favorite tiger-people from Nam housed out in those woods, but no power on American earth would dare to train a small army one hundred miles from the capital, no.

Other, stories seemed to reach us just long enough to go underground again. There were weekend parties on his grounds that owed more to the kind of whing-dings we used to give in Saigon than to diplomatic Washington. Lobbyists, senators, hot congressmen, hot industrialists, hot corporate raiders were joined by hot ladies. In Washington, enterprising people might give parties for corporate and congressional powers, but not with hot ladies. As a credible description of any reality I could comprehend, tales about Butler entertaining the right people and thereby amassing uncountable sums would have gone better on one of those honey-and-tycoon TV dramas that live it up for an hour a week by exploiting the true physics of gossip. That science calls for *low specifics in the scenario*, otherwise known as fairy tales for the horny. I was wise enough to know that the accumulation of money was too consuming a pursuit to be distracted by sex. Sex was but a sidebar for the young and cocaine-inclined. While there appeared to be no shortage of cocaine out at Thyme Hill, and some of the ladies, doubtless, were young, the scenario was wrong. If Butler was giving the wildest parties within a hundred miles of Washington, D.C., it was not to make deals, but to cover something larger.

A *symphony* might be in the works. You could calibrate its size by the gossip at Langley. The gossip kept stopping short. No real nuggets came back with the stories. That was the telling clue. While speculation had Dix Butler running a gargantuan *Venus flytrap*, I did not see that as the prime operation. A Venus flytrap might be out there, but what was Dix putting behind it? Certainly, he was capable of anything. In Saigon, he had recruited his own small army of Vietnamese for improvisational hits on the Vietcong; that army had waged a few drug wars as well. One night, very drunk, under a Southern Hemisphere

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moon, Butler claimed to have started an enterprise or two with the profits. These monies, he assured me, would go back to the Company. That was important.

"What is coming up?" he asked me solemnly. "I'll tell you. Harry, this war is going to undress the CIA. Sooner or later they are going to rip off all our band-aids, and there won't be blood for the great American public to look at."

"Yes? What will there be?"

"Bat shit. All the bat shit we've been hiding. The great American public, and their elected cocksuckers, the Congress of these Disgruntled and Disunited States are going to cut the CIA's balls off when they discover all those tons of bat shit. So we got to get ready. We need covert money, honey. Secret money nicely put away. Take a good look at me." He showed his teeth. "I'm going to be the Agency *banker*."

Whether he had or had not become our covert banker, a Venus flytrap to catch key politicians in covertly photographed positions was still not likely. Not only was sexual blackmail illegal by our charter, it was also close to anathema for those fifteen thousand ribbon clerks, typists, experts, analysts, and programmers, all that human tonnage who made up 90 percent of our CIA personnel; they were as conventional as Pentagon folk. High-profile sex shops were not the soup of choice for good Company people who went to church on Sunday, read *National Review*, and believed we were the clean-living in the land, no, you could not have such people processing paper from Butler's peephole operation, and besides, such a peephole sounded as large as a tunnel entrance. What, then, was going on? Why Thyme Hill?

I looked across at Rosen. I do not know if it was the slow pace of my thoughts or the calm with which I waited—I had drunk enough Glenlivet by now to be calm at my own funeral—but he, too, seemed to be back in some facsimile of composure. He scribbled a line on a piece of notebook paper, tore it off and held it up for me.

"*I've been out to Thyme Hill*," was what I read.

"Did you like it?"

"*I've never been to the Playboy mansion*," he wrote, "*but Thyme Hill must make Hugh Hefner look like a spinster having a few lady friends*"



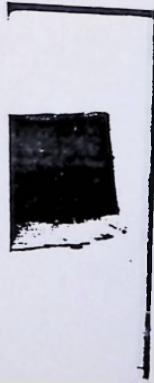
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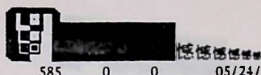
in for tea."

He gave a wan smile and consigned such information to the fire. I gave a wan smile back. In those awful hours when you wonder if you have spent half your life in the wrong occupation, it was usually my estimate that much of our work would seem ludicrous to an impartial observer. Of course, we did our work on the assumption that God had small use for impartial observers.

The fact is that we were in need of a high-level sex shop. The Intelligence services of other nations took such instruments of the trade for granted. Harlot had inveighed for years against our domestic bonds. In the U.S., we couldn't begin to do what we needed to do. All too many delicate but local counterintelligence operations had to be handed over to the FBI, and they, from our point of view, were egregious bunglers. Their power, if you believed Harlot, had been maintained less by their proficiency than by J. Edgar Hoover's special files. Hoover loved *tidbits*. He collected them. It had given him a wrestler's lock on Congress and the Presidency. J. Edgar, after all, kept encyclopedic files on every cabinet officer and senator who had anything to do with a woman not his wife, and should the wife go in for comparable excursions, Hoover was ready to have photographs of her navel as well. No President ever took him on. J. Edgar had already supplied them with too good an insight into the maverick inclinations of previous Presidents. When it came, therefore, to reducing J. Edgar's power at home, and increasing ours, his private files made the difference.

We had tried to lessen the gap. We bestowed a few extra duties on our Office of Security. The O of S had access to the files of the Metropolitan Police in Washington, D.C., who had an officer, one Captain Roy E. Blick, who had a pipeline into a call-girl operation in a Washington hotel (the Columbia Plaza, if you would have the name). Blick had caught his share of significant folk in extremes of gay apparel, degradation, subjugation—I heard about such from Harlot in the days when he still maintained a clandestine but monitorial function over Rosen in Security. Poor Ned—not yet Reed—had to put in his hours with Captain Blick, which meant he had to do his best to keep Blick from sharing all the spoils with Hoover. "Ah, those names,"





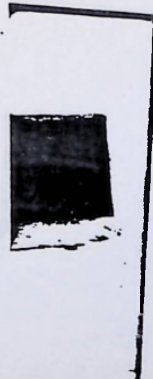
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Harlot once exclaimed. "I tell you, Harry, people who work on the margins of propriety seem to have been given their monikers by Charles Dickens." As if he were an outback tribesman repeating a sound he did not understand, he added, "J. Edgar Hoover. Roy E. Blick. J. Edgar Hoover. Roy E. Blick." Then he sighed for Rosen. "Poor Ned. They do give him sorry jobs at Security. Catering to Blick!" And Harlot gave his wink. After all, Rosen, before moving to Security, had once been in charge of Harlot's special files. Limited they might be, but as a point of professional pride, Harlot separated himself from Hoover's grab-bag of slurs, innuendos, and Polaroids, and instructed Rosen not to pick up every piece of gumbo that landed on the beach. Content had to be evaluated.

Still, Harlot had powers of anticipation. A friend of Kit-tredge's, Polly Galen Smith, the former wife of a senior officer in one of our divisions, had begun a *VIP affair* with President Kennedy. (VIP affair is a descriptive of the prevailing arrangements: time allotted for entering, doffing clothes, taking one's jump into bliss, showers, clothes back on, saying good-bye, is twenty minutes—"You don't become VIP for too little," remarked Harlot.)

A year and a half, however, after the President's assassination, Polly Galen Smith was beaten to death on the tow path of a Potomac canal. A possible assailant was found, tried, and acquitted. While her murder seemed to have no relation to us, the conclusion that we were not involved was not obvious in the immediate hours after the assault. Whom had the lady been taking to bed, after all, *since* Jack Kennedy? Harlot proceeded at once to her house, and—as an old family friend—was able to console the children. Rosen, whom he had brought along, thereby managed to slip up to the master bedroom where he lifted Polly Galen Smith's diary from a small drawer in her knee-hole desk and removed the *sneaky* Harlot had installed in the baseboard back of her bed. Montague had seen it as his direct if disagreeable duty to monitor the lady. At worst, there could have been hanky-panky with attractive Soviet officials in Washington.

Relatively speaking, all that had been the petty improvisation of pioneering days. Now, in the eighties, by the thrust, at



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least, of the over-muted gossip, the question was whether we had constructed a Venus flytrap that would be the envy of the FBI. Or was that too unbalanced an assumption? It begged the question whether Dix Butler was still a loyal son of the grange. He could have made separate arrangements with the FBI and/or the DEA. Or, if they could afford it, the SIS, SDECE, and the BND, (which, for those who would inquire, are respectively, English, French, and German intelligence).

I reached for the pad.

"Did Harlot go out to Thyme Hill?"

"On occasion."

"Do you know what he did there?"

"No."

"Zero return?" I asked aloud.

"Well, Harry, you could be making too much of it. A lot of people went out there. Sunday afternoon was not Saturday night."

I did not want to ask the next question, but need was greater than pride. I took the pad. "Did Kittredge accompany Harlot?"

Rosen looked at me. Then he nodded.

"How many times?" I asked.

Rosen held up his extended hand. Five times, said his fingers. He was looking at me with compassion. I did not know whether to feel insulted or to admit that I was sufficiently bruised to accept his concern. I was certainly taken all the way back to a fist fight I had one summer in Maine with a cousin two years older, age eleven, and too large for me, really, to fight. He had landed a roundhouse on the side of my nose which sent a star rocketing from one end of my inner firmament to the other; the star so dislodged my balance that I went down to one knee. Drops of blood, heavy as silver coins, plopped from my nose to the ground. The recollection added old pain to new. I had to see Kittredge.

When I got to my feet, Rosen looked miserable. That may have been what I needed. Irony is the armature to keep one erect when everything within is falling. I held fast to the irony that Rosen, who had wanted me to fetch Kittredge, could not now bear to be left alone. I saw the fear in his eyes.

On the pad, I wrote, "Are you expecting Dix Butler tonight?"

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"I can't be certain," he managed to say.

"Will your three men prove enough?"

"I can't be certain of that either."

I nodded. I pointed upstairs.

"I'd like you to remain in earshot," Reed Rosen said.

"If Kittredge is feeling well enough, I'll come down with her."

"Please."

I left him by the fire, climbed the stairs to our bedroom, and took out my key. When I reached for the knob, it turned freely in my hand, and so I was not caught completely by surprise that Kittredge was neither in bed nor in the bedroom.

OMEGA-12 | Looking at the long, light hollow where she had lain on the coverlet, I knew where she had gone. Once Kittredge gave me a great start by confessing she would, on occasion, visit the Vault.

"I detest the place," I told her.

"No, when I'm alone in the house and begin to wonder if I can't possibly become any more lonely, I go there," she said.

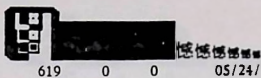
"Tell me why."

"I used to be so afraid of what is in this house. But now I'm not. When I go down to the Vault I feel as if I've gotten to the center of my loneliness, as if there's a bit of land, after all, in the midst of absolutely endless seas. Then, when I come up, Harry, the rest of the house seems less unpeopled."

"Nothing bothers you down there?"

"Well, I suppose if I allowed myself," Kittredge said. "I could hear Augustus Farr rattling his chains, but, no, Harry, I feel no vengeance in that place."

"You really are a lovely girl," I replied.



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Now, I was obliged to remind myself how near I had come this night to carrying her down to the Vault. It gave me a sudden glimpse of myself—one of those rare views returned by the mirror when we are not in any degree loyal to ourselves and so pass cruel and immediate judgment on the apparition in the glass only to realize in the next instant that it is our own face we are condemning. Drunk, miserable, hollow as a gourd, I could hear the silences where unseen judges gather.

The cry of an animal came through the night. It was no ordinary sound. I could not tell from how far away, but the howl came to my ear like the lonely moan of a wolf. There are few wolves in these parts. The cry came again. Now it was as full of suffering and horror as a lacerated bear. There are no bears near. The cry had to have been stirred by my commotion.

Twenty-one years ago, on the dirt road leading from the highway to our back shore, a tramp had been found, partially devoured, in the thicket near Gilley Butler's house. I am told he lay there with the most frightful expression of fear on what was left of his mouth. Could the shriek of the animal I had just heard be equal to the mutilated silence of the tramp? Who could know? Twenty-one years ago came down to early spring of 1962, a time when some of us were looking to locate a plane to spray poison on Cuban sugar fields. Had there been a year of my working life that had not offered one smothered howl?

Standing in our empty bedroom, my thoughts collided face to face with Damon Butler, the long-dead relative of Gilley Butler—Damon Butler, first mate to Augustus Farr, two and a half centuries dead. This unholy surprise visited me at this moment neither as a ghost nor a voice, but as an image so deep within my mind that for an instant I felt occupied by another presence: I saw what he had seen.

I made prodigious efforts not to see anything at all. I stood in the middle of the bedroom, and made—yes, I call them prodigious efforts although I did not move—made a most fervid attempt to decide that what I now saw in my imagination was neither a gift nor an invasion, but the simple delayed result of an afternoon I had spent ten years ago in the Bar Harbor Library reading Damon Butler's ship journal, an honored artifact among local library treasures. So, I tried to tell myself that the vision



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before me now had been put together from no more than the first mate's papers: bills of lading, shoals negotiated, sloops for sale. The execution of the French commodore that I was witnessing was but the gory essence of Butler's journal; it was just that I had not allowed it to come back to my thoughts until now. What a formidable incarceration of memory! It all came back. Like a knock on the door before the door flies open.

His ship gone, his men butchered, the French commodore was stripped of his uniform. Naked, arms pinioned, the victim spit, nonetheless, into his captor's face. In reply, Farr raised his cutlass. The blade was sharp. The commodore's head flew off like a cabbage. Like the thump of a cabbage striking the deck—so goes Damon's account. Other crew members were to swear that the corpse, neck spurting, bound limbs straining, sought to rise to its knees until Farr, in a frenzy, kicked it over. There the body lay on the deck, feet twitching. But the head, off to the side, kept moving its mouth. All agreed its mouth was moving. To that, adds Damon Butler, he heard speech issue from those bloody lips. To Farr was said: *Si tu non veneris ad me, ego veniam ad te.*

On that night, years ago, when I followed whatever or whoever was in my dream all the way down to the Vault, I did not think of the speech that came forth from the decapitated head. Now I did. The Latin was clear: "If you do not come to me, I will come to thee." An intimate curse!

To be out of earshot of Rosen, I took the back stairway. In the cellar, one of the casement windows showed a small pane broken. Through the gap came night air, and its odor was not native to the island. If the nose is a link to memory, then I was sniffing the stale waters of a canal off the Potomac; the muggy fens of the old Georgetown swamps were redolent on the Maine air. I thought of Polly Galen Smith and her attacker; I shuddered. I had just brushed into a cobweb, and its touch, sticky and intimate, remained in my hair. Now I was less certain of what I breathed. Was it the effluvia of the mud flats on the old Chesapeake and Ohio Canal? Even as the whoops and cries of a drinking party can travel immaculately through a fog, to be heard a league away on a stranger's porch, so I wondered if the bay marsh that had witnessed the death of the man who might or



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might not be Harlot could be dispatching its scent hundreds of miles north to me. In what a malodorous place had the body first washed ashore! The dank smell I used to fear at the bottom of the Keep must have been the first herald of such a horror. Now the wooden steps to the Vault were rotted and loose. It was so long since I had used them that I had forgotten how they could cry out. I might as well have been walking into a ward of men maimed by war. Each step had its own bottomless lament.

There were no lights in the Vault. The bulbs, as I recounted, were long burned out. Only the open door provided a shaft of illumination. My shadow preceding me, I worked my way down, feeling as if I pushed my limbs through palisades of oppression merely to reach the cubicle where Kittredge slept. It was only when I stood in the near-to-complete darkness of the inner room, light from the cellar above much reduced by the right-angle turn off the entrance, that I could dare to recognize it had been years since I ventured here. How decomposed were the bunks when I touched them.

One foam mattress had gone to powder less than the others, and, on it, Kittredge was lying. There was almost no light in the Vault, but by reflection, her pale skin was white. I could see that her eyes were open, and when I approached, she turned her head ever so slightly to indicate that she was aware of me. Neither of us spoke, not at first. I thought again of that moment years ago when the full moon rose over the horizon from the bottom of the notch between two black hills, and the surface of the dark pond on which my canoe floated was alive with a pagan light.

"Harry," she said, "there's something for you to know."

"I expect there is," I said gently. The anticipation of what she would say reverberated in my head before her words. I experienced that pang one feels so rarely but so precisely in marriage—alarm in advance of the next irremediable step. I did not want her to go on.

"I've been unfaithful," she said.

In every death is a celebration; in every ecstasy, one little death. It was as if the two halves of my soul had just exchanged their places. My guilt for every moment spent with Chloe was, on the instant, relieved of weight; my woe at the new space





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opened between Kittredge and me rushed in on a flood. The hurricane I had been awaiting in the Tropic of Cerebrum was here. Its first blow to my head came down with the long sullen smash of an ugly swell against an old wooden hull.

"With whom?" I asked. "With whom were you unfaithful?" and the royal observer in myself, untouched by hurricane, earthquake, fire, or storms at sea, had time to notice the rectitude of my grammar—what a peculiar fellow was I!

"There was an afternoon with Harlot," she said, "but it wasn't quite an affair, although it was—awful." She stopped. "Harry, there's someone else."

"Is it Dix Butler?" I asked.

"Yes," she said, "Dix Butler. I fear I'm in love with him. I hate the very thought of it, but, Harry, I may be in love with that man."

"No," I said, "don't say that. You must not say that."

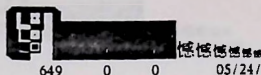
"It is," she said, "a different feeling."

"He's a bold man, but not a good one," I told her, and my voice came out like a verdict rendered from the center of me. No, he was not a good man.

"It doesn't matter," she said. "I'm not a good woman. No more than you are really a good man. It is not what we are," she said. "I think it is what we inspire. Do you know," she added gently, "I like to believe that God is present when we make love. It was certainly true with Gobby, and just as true with you. It was just that God was there in the guise of Jehovah. He was over us, and full of judgment. So harsh. But with Dix Butler, I can't explain why, I feel very close to Christ. Dix is far away from any kind of compassion, but Christ chooses to come close to me then. I have not felt such tenderness since Christopher died. Do you see, I no longer care about myself." She took my hand. "That was always my dungeon—to live entirely within myself. Now I think of how beautiful it would be if I could give Dix some conception of the compassion I feel. So, you see, it just doesn't concern me whether Dix, by your lights or anyone else's, is deserving or not deserving."

As I stood before her, one awful image came near. It was myself in my car, a livid vision: I had crashed against a tree. My face looked out at me from the back of the head of the man who





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was smashed. Was it only an illusion that I had driven away from that endlessly long skid?

Then the bottom fell away. I plunged into my true fear. With the force of an infection that bursts an organ wall to race through the body, had the haunting of this Vault broken out?

"No," I said, "I will not give you up." As if I were in a trance where one climbs higher and higher into the rigging of one's soul in order to dare the leap down, I said, "Dix is on his way here, isn't he?"

"Yes," she said, "he will be here, and you must leave. I cannot let you be here." Tears were just visible in this light. She wept silently. "That would be as awful as the day you and I told Hugh that he must give me a divorce."

"No," I said again, "I have been afraid of Dix Butler since the day I met him, and that is why I am obliged to remain. I want to face him. For myself."

"No," she said. She sat up. "It has all gone wrong, it is all a mess, and Hugh is dead. It is hopeless for you to remain. But if you go away and are not here to be found, then Dix can take care of me. I think he will be able to. Harry, I tell you, there is no way to measure how many ways it will go wrong if you are still here."

I was no longer certain whether she spoke of love, or of peril, but then she answered the question.

"Harry," she said, "it will be a disaster. I know what you have been doing for Hugh. I was working with some of that myself."

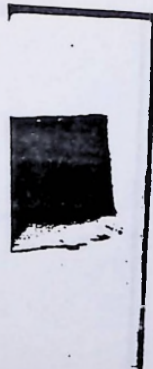
"And Dix?"

"Dix knows enough to keep a lot of people in place. That is why you have to leave. Otherwise, I will be pulled down with you. We will both be destroyed."

I embraced her, I kissed her with that whole mixture of love and desperation that is the only force available to ignite the cold engine of matrimony when passion is lost. "It is all right," I said. "I will leave if you think it is necessary. But you must leave with me. I know that you do not love Dix. It is just an affair."

That was when she broke my heart altogether. "No," she said, "I want to be alone with him."

We have come to the last moment of this night that I can



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recount as a witness. I have some recollection of picking up my heavy manuscript of *The Game* and making my exit by the pantry door to take a silent promenade in the darkness down Long Doane. I passed around one of the guards, and I recall putting the boat back into the channel, but the tide was low and I crossed without difficulty to a neighbor's camp a quarter of a mile south of where I parked my car. I remember driving to Portland, and emptying our bank account in the morning, per Kittredge's suggestion, as if, our marriage gone, the umbilical of property still existed. "Harry," she had said at the end, "take the money that's in Portland. It's twenty thousand and more. You'll need it, and I have the other account." So I emptied what was there, and flew to New York, and here I do not know if I can go on with even this much summary, for as I learned a day and a half later (in the full seizure that accompanies personal and unendurable news when it comes to you by way of the media) our Keep had burned at dawn and the body of Reed Arnold Rosen had been found. There was no word in any of those reports of Kittredge, Dix, or the guards outside.

That night now exists for me in a darkness equal to the void which comes over a cinema palace when the film is savaged by the claw in the gate and tears, the last image dying with a groan as the sound rolls off the sprocket. A wall arises within my memory as black as our incapacity to know where death will lead us. I see the Keep in flames.

For the next months in New York, I obliged myself to give an account of my last night at the Keep. It was an act, as you may expect, of no ordinary difficulty, and there were days and nights when I could not write a word. I believe that I clung to sanity by an expedition into madness. I found that I kept returning to the moment when my car was turning through its skid and time seemed to divide as neatly as a deck of cards cut in two. I began to have the certainty that if I returned to that hairpin turn where the wheel whipped out of my hands, why then I would not see an empty road, but an automobile smashed against a tree, and behind the windshield would be my shattered person. I saw this mangled presence with such clarity that I was convinced: I had *gone over*. The idea that I was still alive was an illusion. The rest of that night had taken place in no larger theater than the small

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part of the mind that survives as a guide over the first roads chosen by the dead. All recollection of myself driving a car, headlights prancing forward like the luminous forelegs of a great steed, was no more than the unwinding of such expectations. I was merely in the first hour of my death. It was part of the balance and the blessing of death that all uncompleted thoughts existing in our mind at a moment of sudden extinction would continue to uncoil. If I had been feeling a touch unreal on my return to Doane, why, that might be the only clue that I was on the pathways of the dead. In the beginning, such roads might hardly diverge from all one knew. If the night had ended with the disappearance of my wife, had it really been my own end that I was mourning? Was Kittredge still waiting for me to return to the Keep on this stormy night? By such means did I keep my sanity through a year in New York. A dead man has less reason to go mad.



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IT IS A measure of the life I led in hiding through that year that I did not do anything about the peculiar condition of my passport. Out of the question was any attempt to replace it. Looking like a small layered pastry, this passport was now being held aloft by the Soviet guard in the glass booth, and he had an incredulous look on his face. Was I proposing to enter the U.S.S.R. by way of Sheremetyevo International Airport, Moscow, holding such water-soaked credentials? Worse. He did not yet know that the name of William Holding Libby referred to an imaginary life which would not bear up under serious interrogation.

"Passport," said the fellow out of his glass cage, "this passport! . . . Why?"

His English was going to prove no more useful than my Russian.

"River," I tried to say in his tongue, helping to suggest that one had fallen into the river with the passport. I was not about to admit I had consigned the document to a laundry room dryer. "River," I thought I was saying, but later, studying phrases for tourists in my guidebook, I came to recognize that I had used the words for arm and rib and fish (respectively ruk, ryebra and ruba). Doubtless I was telling him that I had stuck my passport up my rib and lost my arm to the fish—God knows it was enough to leave my Sovietsky critically befuddled. Like a good stubborn dog, he kept saying, "Passport—no good. Why?" After which he would draw himself to full height and eyeball me—they were obviously groomed to do that. I was perspiring as profusely as if I were wholly innocent, which in some degree I was. How, I kept asking myself, could I have failed to anticipate the consternation this puffed-up tortoise of a passport would arouse under examination?

"Not good," he said. "Expired."

I could feel the line of passengers waiting behind me.

"No. Not expired. Please," I said to him, "pazhalesta!" and reached out my hand. He gave the passport over in great suspicion and I turned with caution the faded crinkled leaves. There! I had found the proper page. My passport had not expired. I pointed out the date and handed it back to him.

The Soviet guard might have been a Minnesota farmboy. He





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had blue eyes, high cheekbones, and close-cropped blond hair: I don't think he was twenty-five. "You," he fixed me with his finger, "you—waiting," and walked off to come back immediately with an officer, a man of twenty-eight, dark hair, a mustache, the same dull green soldier's tunic with tight collar and braiding.

"Why?" said the new one, pointing to my passport as if it were a wholly execrable object.

I found the separate words for ice and water. They came into my mind like a pas de deux. "Lyod," I said, "bolshoye lyod. Much ice." I spread my hands as if I were smoothing a tablecloth. Then I gave to the horizontal plane just fashioned in the air one good karate chop. I made a cracking sound. Hopefully, it might sound like an ice-pond breaking up, and I plunged my hand toward my feet. "Voda. Bolshoye voda—lots of water, isn't that so?" I waved my hands in desperate strokes. A frozen swimmer.

"Ochen kolodno," the first guard said.

"Ochen kolodno. Right. Ice-cold, very cold."

They nodded. They studied the passport back and forth, they looked at my visa which was clean and had the stamps it needed. They fumbled with my name aloud. "William Holding Libby?" It came out: "Veelyam Haul-ding Leeboo?"

"Yes," I said, "that's it."

They studied some names on a hit list. Libby was not on it. They stared at each other. They sighed. They were not dumb. They could feel something was wrong. On the other hand, should they take me off for further questioning, they would have papers to fill out, possibly a lost evening. They must have had plans to go out after work for the blond guard now stamped my papers. He gave a big kid's grin. "Pardone," he said, attempting to give it a friendly Italian-French spin. "Pardone."

The rest of the way through Arrivals showed me Sheremetyevo, a concrete airport built as a showcase for the 1980 Olympics: Welcome to the U.S.S.R. (Note that our Soviet walls are gray!) My bags went through Customs. The microfilm of Alpha, stowed in my secret compartment, attracted no notice—the suitcase had been designed to take confidential papers through routine inspections. I passed the last gate and encountered multilingual signs that told me to look for the