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the lunch drank itself down into the late afternoon, and the sun glared out of the west into the corner of our eyes as it dipped below the awning open to the road, and once in a while, a car went by or a drunk wandered in or out.

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

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

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

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

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

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inner balance. Then Khrushchev, one of the brave, replaced Stalin. I love Khrushchev."

"Why?" I asked.

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

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

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

"Who is they?"

"Your teachers. Miss huge point. Take question from Russian point of view. We see cruel people magnetized by power."

"Isn't this a little beyond Marx?"

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

"Yes," he said, "contemplate Khrushchev. *He is* not wholly popular. Many Russian detractors. Some say *he is* too emotional." Kittredge, you get the idea, I hope. Only this trace of deformation showed. "Yes," he said, "almost all agree Khrushchev is *nyet kulturny*. You comprehend *nyet kulturny*?"

"I speak no Russian."

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

"Does *nyet kulturny* mean not cultured?"

"Of course. Crystal clear. Not cultured. Gross. That is worst thing you can say of a Russian"—yes, his better English was still with him. "Hordes of my people lived for centuries in huts.

Nobody need to wipe his shoes. Floors were dirt. Animals slept with family. *Nyet kulturny*. Crude. Void of high culture. So, Khrushchev embarrasses many. Will ruin him yet."

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

"Believe me. Gross, brutal, minion of Stalin. Yet, grows in stature. Immeasurable bravery to repudiate Stalin. You should try explaining to your people. In Moscow now, many high party leaders say to Khrushchev, 'U.S. has four times more nuclear capacity. We are obliged to catch up.' Khrushchev says, 'If U.S. attacks, we answer. Both nations *are* destroyed. So, will be no war. Our Soviet need is to develop *our* economy.' Khrushchev resists huge military pressure. Khrushchev a good man."

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

He nodded. "That is because you represent corporate capitalism. Linear. Unilinear people in corporation." He took a large swallow of his black coffee which was thick as filtered mud, and nodded. "Yes," he said, "Americans never understand how Communist Party works. See us as living under total relation to ideology. Grave error. Only corporate capitalism lives in total relation to ideology. We, who you call slave people, more individual."

"I believe you really think that."

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

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

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

"By half?"

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

"And the other half?"

"Our secret half. We brood."

"Over what?"

"Our soul. I taste *my* soul. American people speak of free-floating anxiety, yes? Lack of identity, yes? But Russian says: I am losing my soul. Americans used to be like Russians. In nine-

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teenth century. When were individual entrepreneurs. Then, still *the* baroque spirit. In your hearts. In American architecture. Individual people, eccentric. Now, Americans are corporate capitalists. Brainwashed."

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

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

"Straight face."

"Tell me about your prison camps."

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

I could hardly believe he had said this much. He was scowling at his coffee as if it had been a mistake to leave his old comrade-in-arms, vodka, for this new acquaintance. Then he gave a great sigh as if to clean his breath of old memories. "Do you know about *beriozhka*?" he asked. "Birch trees."

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

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

To the Birches

*pale sentinels
silent arrows
light and moonlight
our silver sun*

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

Then he tore off the unmarked bottom half of the sheet on which the poem was written, scribbled a note upon it for me, and

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passed it over. The wording, Kittredge, (and you will soon see why) is offered to you from memory.

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

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

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

Devotedly,
Harry

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

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ence would be altered, and I felt some need, no matter how unprofessional, to keep it intact.

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

Of course, there was the real possibility that a movie camera had been installed behind a peephole in the café to record the moment when Boris passed his written message over to me and I read it and he then incinerated it in the ashtray, both of us watching solemnly. In such a case, if I did not report the incident to Hunt and Omaley, and there was indeed a KGB mole at Soviet Russia Division in position to see my report on the picnic, then I would be prey to blackmail if I made no mention of Masarov's message.

I decided to state in my report, therefore, that the note had been passed to me; I would, however, leave out the reference to the Soviet Russia Division. If the intent of the KGB was to increase our suspicion of our own people, then I would be thwarting their purpose. The remaining contents of the note would prove vague. I decided to accept the risk.

Why? As if someone had poked a rude finger into my stomach, the question hit with force. Why, indeed? Why not tell the truth? If it disrupted the Soviet Russia Division, well, they had suffered, no doubt, in such fashion before. Yet I knew I would not change my mind. Not only was living in close quarters with Al Omaley much like cohabiting with a contagious disease, but I did not feel ready to face his meticulous paranoia. I, the messenger, had to be tainted by the message.

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

It was now ten o'clock on Sunday night, and one could put off calling Howard Hunt no longer. I went down to the street and found a pay phone. On the Avenue of the 18th of July, the night was as quiet as a midnight Tuesday in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

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sin.

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

"Getting drunk with our friend."

"Until now?"

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

"Oh, no."

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

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

"Well, maybe I do now."

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

"Not wholly affirmative on that."

"Shit."

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

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

"I doubt it."

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

"Well, yes."

"Hang around to help her with garbled transmission."

"Of course."

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

"Wiser minds than mine will determine that."

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

"Twenty-percent possibility."

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

"All the same," I told him, "there are a few new flowers in the nosegay."

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

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

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

My relations with Nancy during the hours it took to tran-



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scribe the tape proved as formal as the muted aftereffect of our single kiss, a sad void for her, I was certain, but by two in the morning, the transcript was done, and so was my accompanying report. I went back to the hotel, while Nancy, loyal to the code of all the unsung soldiers, was still sending our text on the encoding machine. Our five-letter groups would be deciphered by communications people in Washington before the dawn.

Hjalmar Omaley, whether alerted by Hunt, or paranoically instinctive, came by some twenty minutes in advance of my departure, a precise timing that enabled him to read my report and go through the transcript just as Nancy was finishing the last page. He had the oddest style of perusal. Reminiscent of the way General Gehlen used to mutter over the chessboard, he all but crooned into the contents. "Holy hooligans, Hjalmar, holy hooligans," he kept saying as he read, but whether this was praise for the operation or astonished disapproval, I had no idea. Just as I was leaving, Nancy, quick as a bird darting into the eaves (for I was not supposed to see it), flashed one tender smile at Hjalmar. It seemed to me then that I would be wiser to worry over the empty space in my own heart rather than the void in others.

By the middle of Monday morning, Howard was in a state of great excitement. The Sourballs had succeeded in closing the discrepancy on Masarov's age. Their Soviet Personnel Record dossier was now in order. While Hunt would not, or could not, provide me with more detail than to say, "Masarov is not thirty-two but thirty-nine, not, as he claims, thirty-seven. Get set for this: He is higher echelon than we thought. Considerably above Varkhov in rank."

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

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

While I had never heard the expression before, the metaphor obviously spoke of an operation where the number-one man is concealed.

"What of Zenia and Varkhov?" I asked.

"In for reappraisal. One thing is nailed down, though. Our Masarov here in Uruguay is one of the leading KGB experts on



America."

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

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

If my visit to the home of Boris and Zenia had taken me through heavy cross-examination, the picnic subjected me to an eighteen-hour day with Hjalmar, followed by two more eighteen-hour days responding to questionnaires from Washington. More than once I came close to confessing what I now called (in the last redoubts of the privacy of my mind) "The Abominable Omission," for the questionnaires certainly kept returning to the contents of Boris' note. What certainty could I submit that the message, as recollected by me, was complete: 60 percent? 70 percent? 80 percent? 90 percent? 95 percent? 100 percent? I made the mistake of answering 80 percent. As if they were psychically attuned to the topography of culpability, the Sourballs follow-up question stated: *In your reconstruction, the note has three full statements plus three one-word exhortations. If recall is 80% complete, what is the possibility that a fourth sentence is missing?*

To which I replied: *Zero possibility.*

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

Zero possibility.

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

I was sitting at a typewriter console hooked up to our Encoder-Decoder. An encrypted question would come in from Washington, go through the decoder, activate the keys of my typewriter, and come out in deciphered, five-letter groups on my typewriter page, which I could read, by now, as quickly as plain text. BORIS NOTEL ACKSC ONCER TEDIM PACT didn't cost me one-tenth of a second more. Then, so soon as I typed out a reply to the comment, my five-letter groups would begin their trip back through the same typewriter and Encoder-Decoder to the Sourballs in Cockroach Alley. I would sit and wait for my typewriter to commence clacking again. After hours of such back and forth, I began to feel as if I were playing chess with an opponent in another room. Over my shoulder, Hjalmar Omaley read the questions and my answers.

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

"What is that supposed to mean?"

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He had an irritating smile. His teeth would gleam in concert with the gleam that came off his eyeglasses. "It means," said Hjalmar, "precisely what it says."

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

PRECISELY WHAT IT SAYS came back.

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

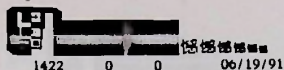
At Yale, I had always detested the superior sort of graduate student who looked like Hjalmar Omaley. Their heads were invariably held at odd angles. They listened with a half-smile. They appeared to be sniffing the inferior odor of your turds as compared to the integrated concert of their own. They would answer inquiries with questions or with such throwaways as *precisely what it says*. When, however, they finally took account of the subject, they left you in no doubt of their credentials. "We have under consideration," said Hjalmar, "a high-echelon member of the KGB, expert in American studies, who dallies with a minor case officer in a country with small to negligible geopolitical impact. Said KGB officer then proceeds to incriminate himself to said minor case officer by dint of extreme remarks, allusions, and unorthodox comparisons of his country and party to a sordid husband and wife. He abuses Marxist tenets. All such product would guarantee, at the least, his recall, and imprisonment if we were to forward transcript obtained to the KGB and they were to believe it. Do you follow me now?"

"Yes."

"Good. Since he is, however, heading up the KGB cadres here, his own transcript, if he has one, need not be of concern to him. He has obviously been given sanction. There are elements in the KGB who do have sanction to speak freely and, on occasion, act freely. Such post-Neanderthals can be seen as the equivalent of seventeenth-century Jesuits. Are you still capable of following me?"

"Yes."

"Good. We now encounter the specific implausibility of the entire situation. To summarize what I have just said: A major KGB operative who, so far as we can see, has no intention of defecting, nonetheless engages in major conversational indis-



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cretions with the opposition. If there is an entelechy in his process—and there must be entelechy, or else, why commence?—he succeeds in presenting a note which is destroyed almost immediately after it is delivered. That is a dubious business, since the message has no incisive content. It names no person, attacks specifically none of our departments, and in sum, is too general to be disruptive. He has given you a shovel without a handle. What explanation do you offer?"

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

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

"Repeat your question," I said.

"What explanation do you offer of your meeting?"

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

"Expatriate."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FINAL, asked the E-D.

FINAL, I typed back.

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

Omaley looked happy for the first time in three days.

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

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

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

21 | "Preposterous," said Howard next morning, "outrageous. You have been doing your best to stay afloat with a KGB heavyweight, and they want to flutter you because they are not happy with the results? You are absolutely right. This is jurisdictional. I'm not letting any paranoid peacocks

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drive a truck right through the middle of my Station."

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

"Glad you said that, but I'm here to protect my people fully as much as I am ready to expose them to appropriate risk-taking." He paused. "I want all the tarps tied down on this one, however. Are you really 95-percent sure of your accuracy about this note? That's what ticked them off, you know. You can't get cheeky with their evaluation process. It's like defiling the Torah or the Koran." He looked most carefully at me. "Between us, cozy as thieves, what is your real estimate?"

"Ninety percent."

"Okay. I have to buy that. But why is Masarov's message so anemic? The name of the game is to maim someone's name."

"Howard, I put it in my report. I have a theory that no one gives credence to: just a couple of weeks ago, on February 2, the Russians asked for a summit meeting. I think Masarov wanted me to bear the same message that the Russians are sending in a thousand different ways all over the world. 'Give the summit a try, Khrushchev is okay.' Part of their personal propaganda approach."

"All right. Those lines of possibility do stand out in the transcript. But why confuse matters? Boris is an old pro. He knows the cardinal differences between a clandestine note and a political pitch—which, by the way, I don't trust for one minute, those Sovietskys don't want peace ever, just a breathing space to find a new way to screw us." He paused. "But, all right. Boris gives his sermon. We can all cry for the Soviet Union. Countless-countless killed. Yes, and how about the five thousand Polish officers Masarov helped to shoot in the back of the head, and the other ten thousand Polish officers that remain missing? Stalin knew what he was doing. He was killing the cadres of a possible future independent Poland, yeah, those Sovs want peace—I'll believe that when pimps stop taking their cut." He tapped his desk as if it were a podium.

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

"I could have been in many things. It kills me to look at the properties you could develop out in Carrasco. We pay a stiff price, Harry, for giving our allegiance to the Company. A CIA man makes a whole financial sacrifice for life. But that's another



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matter. Let's keep the target in our sights. Explain to me one more time your understanding of Masarov's note."

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

"So you buy his speech at face value?"

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

"God, you're young."

"I guess I am."

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

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

"I appreciate that."

"Kid, do you have any idea how expensive this could prove for yours truly?"

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

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

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

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

I caught a whiff of his breath. He had had a few belts, and

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that was certainly not his habit for the morning. It was possible that he was more agitated than me.

Howard left soon after to keep a date for lunch with one of his Uruguayan friends. "I'm going to hold the line," he said.

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

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

She did after a moment.

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

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

"I'll take it," I said.

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

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

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

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

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

"Hello," I said into the mouthpiece.

"Is that other person standing at your elbow?" said Kit-tredge in my ear.

"More or less."

"Banish her."

"It'll take some doing."

"All the same!"

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

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

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

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

"Are we clear?" asked Kittredge.

"Yes."

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

"Are you all right?"

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

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

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

"You've got it," I said. Given the proportions of the Abominable Omission, why deny anything small and precise?

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

"The first thing wrong with your proposal," I said, "is that your call right now has already ticked off a nasty response. Unless I can come up with a feasible explanation, I'll never be able to get a second call out tonight on my lovely red phone, which, incidentally, dear lady, is housed in a stifling closet—"

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

echo."

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

"I have," she said.

"About my last letter?"

"No, never the letter. About Masarov's crazy note. Your letter arrived yesterday, yes, yesterday, Wednesday, and I made up the story of your phone call, said it was at 4:00 P.M., and Hugh was sufficiently exercised—"

"Speak more slowly. Did you say exercised?"

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

"Slower, please."

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

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

"Thinks your natural instinct has a touch of the divine tar."

"Divine tar?"

"Harry, that's Hugh's accolade. The stuff God filched back from the Devil. Divine tar."

"Well, Kittredge, you've left me impressed with myself."

Suddenly, however, all amusement was gone. "Oh, Harry, it just occurred to me. When you speak to Hugh, do get *our* little story straight. When you phoned me yesterday, you did impart the missing contents to me."

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

"I think you're wonderful. However, that's not what's at issue. How are you and my spouse going to speak if you can't get a secure phone?"

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

"Is it virgin?" she asked.

"Hell, no."

"You must select another pay phone you've never used before. Then phone us at home around eleven tonight on any pay phone. Hugh will pick up. Don't speak to him by name. Just



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give the color code for the selected phone and hang up. Of course, you had better skew the color code."

"By how many digits?"

"Choose a number."

"Four . . ."

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

"Three."

"Skewed by three."

"Shouldn't it be a continuing skew?"

"Agreed."

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

"Agreed," she said.

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

"Hugh will probably get you out of that."

"How?"

"Harry, be content."

She hung up before I could say good-bye.

It was a long afternoon and made more nervous by thoughts of the skew. My recall of the color code for phone numbers was still absolute—on that I could feel well trained. Zero was white; 1, yellow; 2, green; 3, blue; 4, purple; 5, red; 6, orange; 7, brown; 8, gray; 9, black. A full skew turned zero into 9, 1 to 8, 2 to 7, so forth. A skew of three changed 3 to 9, 4 to 8, 5 to 7, 6 to 6, 7 to 5, so forth. But continuing skew was a misery. The first digit in the telephone number was skewed by three, the next by three more, or six, the third by nine, the fourth by three again, the fifth by six again, the sixth by nine once more. One didn't dare do it in one's mind but reached for pencil and pad. The virtue of the continuing skew, however, was that anyone tapping in on the first conversation who happened to be familiar with the color code would still, if he did not know the continuing skew, need time to break down the number. By then, presumably, the pay phone would have been used and never employed again.

Hunt returned from lunch and locked his door. I surmised he was on the phone to Washington. Then he called in Hjalmar Omaley who looked expressionless when he came out. It took



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no great acumen to recognize that the demand by SR Division for a lie detector test was not going to be decided by Hunt, but back in Cockroach Alley. The Encoder-Decoder was certainly silent.

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

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

"Yessir."

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

"I won't."

He slammed out of the office. I understood his fury. He was not going to circle the encampment with our wagons after all.

Alone in the office, I felt gainfully employed for the first time since Sunday afternoon. My regular meeting with Chevi Fuertes was scheduled for Friday at the safe house, and I had to go over his file. Then my accounts with AV/ALANCHE, sadly screwed up. I had not been out with them in two weeks and they were in a state of disarray from a couple of bloody street fights. My undone account books concerned not only AV/OCADO and AV/ALANCHE, but AV/OUCH-1, AV/OUCH-2, and AV/ERAGE, all on my desk to be brought up to date for Nancy Waterston. As I sat alone in the office, I could even feel AV/ERAGE, my homosexual society journalist, sulking—I had not met him this week for a drink. Yet the thought of all these unaccomplished tasks was curiously soothing as if I could wrap them about myself like a poultice against the raw adrenaline of the last three days.

That evening, after choosing the critical phone for my serious conversation with Harlot, I ate alone in a trucker's café in the Old City, an uneasy but pleasurable anticipation suffusing itself into my broiled meats and wine as if I were getting ready to meet Sally on a good night for me. I obtained from the waiter a fistful of change, and my pants pocket, on leaving the restaurant, lolled concupiscently against my thigh.

By ten-thirty, I had chosen the phone booth for the first call,



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and at ten of eleven, I called the international operator, gave her the number of the Stable in Georgetown, and deposited my coins. When I heard Harlot's voice, I said, "In front of a yellow wall is a white table with a purple lamp. A man in a brown jacket, yellow pants, and red shoes is standing. There is no chair."

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

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

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

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

I had chosen to receive the second telephone call in a nearby bar of reasonable decorum. It had two phones in private booths and thereby offered less likelihood that some stranger would be kept waiting if our conversation should take a while. Indeed, I was in the booth five minutes in advance with the phone up to my ear and my other hand on the hang-up lever so that the apparatus would be able to ring.

In the fourteenth minute, it did.

"Well," said Harlot, "back to the old rigamarole. I dislike pay phones quite as much as you do."

"This one has been interesting," I said.

"Time-consuming." He paused. "Here is the hygiene. If necessary, for purposes of clarity, names are permissible. Should we, for any reason, disconnect, hold your place and I will call again. If you don't hear in five minutes, wait until midnight. I'll call then."

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

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

"Zero doubt," I said.

"Why did you not report it?"

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

"Presumptuous of you."

"I can only say that my deepest instinct told me to follow such a course," I said. "I had a hunch you would want me to

follow such a course."

"This is amazing," said Harlot. "Do you know, if you had consulted me, I would have told you to do just what you did. The real object of the Russian's billet-doux was not SR Division, but closer to home."

"My God," I said.

"Yes. GHOUL. I think there is a furry little creature loose in the Soviet Russia Division. They, in turn, agree that the Agency is suffering a penetration, but place the mole in GHOUL. Dear boy, you were instinctively bright. Since you and I, for better or worse, are seen by now as umbilically attached, even Allen would have had to give some credence to SR's claim that the mole is in my cellar, if you had, that is, reported correctly. I expect Masarov chose you precisely for that reason. No question, you see—they're after me. The Russkys do appreciate my value more than the Agency. And I appreciate your new drinking pal even more than the KGB does. He's a hell of a fellow. Stay away from him. Competitively speaking, he's nearly as competent as myself."

"Good Lord," I said.

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

"No, sir. Not yet."

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

"If I will be permitted to."

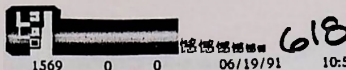
"You will." Pause. "Now, about the lie detector test. You won't have to take it."

"May I query you further?"

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

"Well, good-bye, then."

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



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February 22, 1958

Dearest Harry,

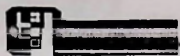
There will be no flutter test. If my husband is Byzantine on matters so minor as a dinner party, I assure you that he is Bach's harpsichordist when it comes to tweaking Company strings. So, to pull you out of the clutches of Soviet Russia Division, Hugh chose the Right Gobsloptious Baron of your Western Hemisphere Division, J. C. King. J.C. is not the sort of fellow to welcome Soviet Russia Division's poachers onto his preserve. You are saved. Isn't it a fact that my husband can take care of everyone's career but his wife's?

Actually, Hugh and I have been getting along far better than ever, and since my illness he has been sharing a good deal more of his work with me. You don't know what a great step that is for him. Hugh, for all emotional purposes, was scourged in childhood when his mother killed his father. Since he cannot know whether the death was accidental or purposeful, his Alpha and Omega, built, of necessity, on rival propositions, are like two hill kingdoms facing each other across an abyss. Conceive, then, how difficult it is for him to trust me with any details of his work. (Which, collaterally, is why it would be a disaster for him to know that we are corresponding.) You may ask how I can encourage our letters, then, and I say that Hugh and I belong to a typical bond-and-bombs marriage, which is to say, we are half-wed. Alpha-Hugh and Alpha-Kitt are as joined as our sacraments, but his Omega cannot allow him to put faith in any woman, and my Omega, eager to be free and alone and full of taste for life, is obliged to suffer in the iron parameters of our marriage.

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

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

All the same, Hugh proved to be man enough, and husband



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enough to enter my horrors last summer. When he finally came to understand, despite all his cautions and incalculable filigree of paranoia, that by closing me out of his professional life he was helping to unbalance my mind, he began to reveal to me a bit here and there about the pieces on his playing board. So I may know more now about your situation than you. I wish to give you a warning. The KGB, according to Hugh, has taken great strides in these last few years since Stalin's death. The all-out reign of terror is over, and they have begun to get fearfully skillful again. You might try worrying about them in serious respectful fashion. Hugh's estimate of the Masarov picnic is as follows: the KGB has succeeded in placing a mole in the Soviet Russia Division. The best way to protect said mole is to insinuate a notion into the upper reaches of the Agency that the fellow is to be found in GHOUL. By Hugh's estimate, the KGB set up the picnic in order to hand you a note that would point directly to Soviet Russia Division. This was done on the firm premise that Allen Dulles would then conclude the furry creature was to be located anywhere but in SR Div. Since you were the recipient of the note, but could not produce it, inasmuch as Boris had taken it back, a shadow would fall on GHOUL. The antipathy between GHOUL and SR Division is, after all, no secret. So we would have one more bad mark against Hugh. A provocation set up by the KGB in Uruguay would have been manipulated to great effect by the mole in SR Div back at Headquarters.

The purpose of the picnic, therefore, was not merely to injure GHOUL, but to crimp Hugh's influence in the Agency. That would be a disaster. Hugh is not the man to make such a claim aloud, but I know he feels the KGB are going to be able to penetrate to the very top of the Agency if he is not there to stop them. And it won't take all that many years.

Harry, I know you hate the idea of backing off from Masarov, so I'm going to offer the sum of my modest wisdom. I believe that people like you and me go into intelligence work in the first place because to a much greater degree than we realize, we've been intellectually seduced. And often by nothing more impressive than good spy novels and movies. We want, secretly, to act as protagonists in such ventures. Then we go to work for the Company, and discover that, whatever we are, we are never



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protagonists. We pop into the spy novel at chapter six, but rarely find out what was going on in chapter five, let alone earlier times. Just as seldom are we privy to what happens in the rest of the book. I offered this once to Hugh, and he said, "If you must feel sorry for yourself, read a book on the calculus of partial derivatives. That will give you paradigmatic solace, darling." The key to our lives, Harry, is in the drear word *patience*. We are incompetent without it.

As a test of your patience, I now inform you that I have news, but it is not for this letter. To whet your appetite for slather, I will only say that I have changed my slot in TSS. I am now behind one of the doors that Arnie Rosen used to call "Dracula's Lair." Yes, I am being trained for what we might as well term *heavier* work. I've decided it's time to stop being a nice Radcliffe girl and step onto the dance floor with the barbarian in me who, breathing in great secret, does get somewhat short of wind over Lavinia's stumps.

You had better tell me what you are up to, or you simply won't get the next letter.

Love,
Kittredge

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March 10, 1958

Dear Kittredge,

I have let two weeks go by since receiving your extraordinary letter of February 22, but you gave me such a jolt with talk of Dracula's Lair. I hope you know what you are getting into—whatever it is. I confess to being consumed with curiosity, and

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am exercised that you tell me no more. Yet, given the long hiatus last year in our letters, I feel, paradoxically, a pressure to bring you up to date on my affairs. I am going through my own kind of heavy moral duty.

I suppose I am thinking of my work with Chevi Fuertes. With the exception of a vacation in Buenos Aires that he took with his wife at Christmas, I have seen him at least once a week for the last fourteen months. The Groogs have developed a great taste for Chevi's output, and they monitor my reports carefully. He is far and away our most significant penetration into the Communist Party of Uruguay, and a measure of his importance can be seen in how my war with the Sourballs was brought to its formal close. A cable came from the Right *Gobsloptious* Baron—where did you ever get that word? (Was it at the age of eleven playing jacks on Brattle Street, your pigtails flying? Gobsloptious—my God!) J. C. King sent the following to Hunt: *Commendation confirmed re AV/AILABLE's development of AV/OCADO.*

Hugh's virtuosity is unparalleled. The Commendation did the job. Soviet Russia Division was obliged to recognize that a flutter test at this point would poke a very rude finger into the grand eye of J. C. King. So they withdrew. Hunt, concomitantly, has been been cordial as hell ever since, and promises to take me along on a visit to an *estancia* one of these weekends. To certify this intention, he is teaching me to play polo on a practice field out in Carrasco. Do you know, human perversity being a bottomless pit, I like him more for liking me more!

In fact, I'm a little taken with myself. King's praise may have been stimulated by Hugh, but the language did enable me to reflect back on these fourteen months, and yes, I think I have brought in enough good work on Chevi to, yes, rate the Commendation.

You may then inquire why I have written so little about my top agent. I suppose I have kept away because the job consists of adding up small pieces of information gleaned from Chevi's tasks at the PCU (Partido Comunista de Uruguay), and I did not wish to bore you.

All the same, in these fourteen months, Chevi has moved up the rungs of that organization. His wife may be the leading

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woman in the Uruguayan Party, but Chevi has become her effective equal. He may even be ranked, overall, in the top twenty of Uruguayan Communists, and could one day become titular head of the whole shebang. Already, we have access to the thinking of the leadership.

Of course, the reason he has risen so quickly is that the Station made it possible. You may recall that nearly a year ago we had Chevi plant a transmitter in the PCU's inner office. It was a five-minute job consisting of no more than the replacement of a porcelain wall outlet with our bugged duplicate—an enterprise calling for no more than a screwdriver. Still, it was squeaky work and had to be done under *combat conditions*, that is, in the ten minutes that Chevi's associate was down the hall using the john.

At the time, we debated whether it was worth endangering AV/OCADO, but decided that the prospective take balanced out nicely with the relative security of the caper. Chevi showed neither emotion nor enthusiasm. He merely insisted that his weekly stipend be raised from fifty dollars to sixty. (We settled for a bonus of fifty bucks and a five dollar a week raise.) Then he brought the chore off without incident, and we have been receiving the product ever since, although the transmission is often garbled. Since Chevi, however, does not know how spotty our equipment has proved, he assumes we get it all and that motivates him to be scrupulous in what he tells us about the deliberations of upper-echelon PCU.

Moreover, the dispatch with which he carried off the wall-outlet job helped to convince us that he had turned a corner. This often happens with agents. Their early hysteria is replaced by effective calm. In consequence, Hunt decided to advance his career in the Partido Comunista de Uruguay. Marvelous, isn't it? Easier to get Eusebio Fuertes promoted than myself.

Kittredge, this exercise in *applied intelligence* isn't altogether pretty. We don't go in for wet jobs—at least, not down here, although I won't speak for Dracula's Lair, whew!—but our route did get dirty enough to stop in Pedro Peones' office. Reunited with Libertad La Lengua, Pedro was cordially inclined to entrap a couple of PCU officials for us. They were stationed higher than Chevi and very much in his way. So, a kilo package of heroin happened to be found in the car trunk of the selected PCU

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official (the drug on loan from Peones' narcotics squad). The other Communist was arrested for driving under the influence and then being so rash as to attack the pursuing officers. (After being splashed down with a bottle of liquor, he was then smashed repeatedly, I fear, in the face. That was to show evidence of the battle he *started* with Peones' cops.) While the PCU knew their people were being framed, there was little they could do about it. The first accused was held without bail for allegedly dealing in a large quantity of drugs, and the second was beaten badly enough to be severely demoralized. Replacements had to be found for their jobs.

Now, these victims (if it is any consolation to them) happened to be chosen with considerable care. You might even say the operation was *designed* by Sherman Porringer. I am beginning to see some relation between Oatsie's carefully painted eggshells and the delicacy he brought to this project. Hunt provided the go-ahead—"See what you can do about getting Chevi promoted"—but Porringer put it all into place. Elegant selection of target was what Sherman was hunting for. As he saw it, the key mistake would be to knock out the man directly above Chevi. We had to allow that the PCU would be bright enough to assume Pedro Peones was doing our muscle work, and so their suspicion was bound to fall on the man who was in line to fill the gap. All right, then, reasoned Porringer, look not only for a good man to knock out, but get one whose immediate inferior is not well respected, thereby disposing of two obstacles for the price of one. This double disruption, even though located several rungs up the ladder, would have to benefit Fuertes before too long.

On the drug bust, Peones' victim was a PCU leader of unsailable integrity, but his assistant had a gambling problem, and so was brought to trial by his Party peers on an accusation of collaboration with Peones. Before it was over, the man resigned his office.

Some months later, the second arrest produced comparable results. Chevi had advanced four rungs through our efforts.

Crucial to Porringer's design was that we maintained immaculate hygiene in relation to Peones. Pedro was never given a reason for either arrest, and we even discussed with him at-

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tacks on several other Communist officials including Fuertes. Our assumption was that Peones' police office had already been penetrated by the PCU. The best way to obtain Chevi a clean bill from his own Communists, therefore, would be to add his name to Peones' list of intended PCU victims. Indeed, Chevi was soon warned by the Party hierarchy that Peones was looking to entrap him.

Fuertes began to talk, therefore, of the threat to his safety. "I would hate," he told me, "to be beaten up by Peones' *duros* for being a Communist when, in fact, I am a betrayer of Communists. The punishment would fit too closely to the crime."

"You possess a sense of irony."

"I would hope it is loyalty, not irony, that I will discover in you. Can you tell Peones to stay off this body?" He tapped his chest.

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

"*Verdad?* That is not what I hear."

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

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

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

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

"I think we can exercise some influence." When he laughed at this, I added, "We are more law-abiding than you would ever believe."

More recently, Chevi has become suspicious of his rapid Party advancement. A few months ago he said to me, "It is one thing to betray my coworkers, but another to shoot them in the back."

Still, Chevi has changed considerably. I think. For one thing, he is now high enough on the slope to sniff the air of the summit, and that has been tonic to his ambition. For another, his identity has altered.

Kittredge, either his Alpha or Omega has taken over from the other. He has put on more than thirty pounds, and has grown a prodigious handlebar mustache which, in company with the plump pouches beneath his eyes, has given him a jolly piratical South American look. He makes you think of an overweight

gaucho riding a skinny horse. With Roger Clarkson, he was always on the run for women; now, he is a glutton for food. AV/OCADO is taking on the shape of his name. The largest disagreement we face these days is where to meet. He hates the safe house. May heaven help me if I forget to stock the icebox! He wants *tapas* and beer, steak and bourbon, and—speak of peculiarities—raw onions with good Scotch! Plus desserts. *Dulces*. Even the sound calls to mind a stream of half-frozen delights sweetening the parched canyon of the throat. He talks while eating. His pieces of intelligence come forth best as food passes in the opposite direction. He punctuates tidbits of information by sucking in small jets of air to clean the spaces between his teeth. At times he acts as gross as Peones. And he keeps coming back to one theme: that we meet more often in restaurants. I have increasing difficulty in refusing him. For one thing, the denizens of our high-rise apartment house muster an astonishing number of rich widows and well-to-do retired tarts, and they study everyone who comes up to their floor. Each time the elevator stops, doors open a crack all up and down the hall. Eyes peek at one voraciously. These ladies must have expected a comfortable old age where they could pull back wooden shutters and set their accumulated bosoms on a worm-woody second-story windowsill while they observed life in the common street below. Instead, they are now marooned on the twelfth floor and can only keep an eye on who goes in and out of each apartment. Needless to say, Fuertes is also aware of this, and claims it is dangerous. The word could be out among the neighbors that our apartment is kept by *El Coloso del Norte*, and, besides, he might be recognized. He has lived almost all of his life in Montevideo.

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

"Howard," I protest gently, "we'll lose a lot if I can't talk to him." I pause. "What about moving to a more secluded safe house?"

"All safe houses present problems. His real bitch is the *ambiente*. That goddamn furniture! I can't get requisitions for decent stuff. Economies in the wrong place. I hate tacky govern-

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ment mentalities. A posh safe house is a good investment if you can only convince the powers that be." He stopped. "Wigs," said Howard. "Tell him to put on a different disguise each time."

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

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

Exiting from this interview, it occurs to me that I may now have put in more hours in the field than Howard. In any event, I certainly know better than to follow his advice. As a practical matter, never treat an agent like Chevi any worse than a younger brother. And most of the time I cater to him. Part of that derives, I know, from my incomplete ability, as Hugh would put it, to toughen up. Damn it, I feel for my agent. Chevi does manage to penetrate into all those close places in oneself where you chart the rise and fall of your ego. (Query: We've never talked about Alpha Ego and Omega Ego and their inner relations. That's a whole study, I know.) Chevi, I suspect, is treating me like a younger brother all the while I am trying to treat him like one. As one example of how he attempts to keep me in place, he loves to speak of his two years in New York when he lived with that Negress in Harlem. She turned tricks, and was on drugs, and encouraged him to be her pimp. After a time, he changes his story and confesses that he actually took on the job. He tells me hair-raising tales about knife fights with other pimps. I don't know how much of it is true—I suspect he is exaggerating—indeed, I would guess he avoided knife fights, but I just can't swear to any of this. He does have a few facial scars. Be assured, however, his tales serve their purpose: I feel inferior to his sophistication. On the other hand, we are always in one or another spiritual contest to see who will end up brother superior.

Lately, I've been having my troubles in this direction. Howard's concept of emblazoning MARXISMO ES MIERDA in six-foot letters on every available town wall has escalated into a small war. If Marxists have their own kind of religious feelings, then connecting Marxism and shit to each other certainly awakens something explosive. The toughest leftist street gangs in Montevideo come from the dock area, and their leaders are high

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cadre in the MRO, an ultra-left group. Such boys are tough. In fact, they proved so rugged that our kids in AV/ALANCHE were getting chewed up by the street fights. It was no fun, I tell you, to sit in my car a half mile away, and hear nothing but a brief "*Emboscada!*"—ambushed!—over my walkie-talkie, then, fifteen minutes later, see the team come straggling back with an unholy number of bloody heads—four out of seven one night. Then, worse: one boy in the hospital, soon another. Howard called on Peones to beef up our troops with off-duty cops handsomely paid from the Special Budget. Well, AV/ALANCHE won a few fights, only to see the MRO come back with reinforcements of their own. These nocturnal encounters have grown into medieval battles.

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

At any rate, the MRO is now on the offensive. YANQUI A FUERA! is getting painted on many walls, and in good Catholic neighborhoods, too. The MRO people seem to have a better sense of where to strike than we do. Hunt decides that one of

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Peones' cops must be secretly aiding the MRO, and wants Chevi to furnish us with detailed information on the MRO cadres so we can get more a line on this.

Fuertes refuses the request outright. He is a serious agent doing serious work, he says, and we are asking him to inform on street youths. "My pride is that I betray those who are situated above me, not beneath me."

"Ayúdame, *compañero*," I exclaim.

"I am not your *compañero*. I am your agent. And insufficiently paid."

"Do you think you will get a raise by refusing us?"

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

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

"Quintessentially American. Get to the bone."

"Will you fulfill our request?"

"I betray big people. Stupid, stuffed-shirt bureaucratic Communists who have sold out their own people for the power they can now exercise at a desk. They are upper filth, and I associate myself with them every day, and become an upper bureaucrat like them. But, I do not delude myself. I have betrayed my people and my roots. I am a viper. Nonetheless, I am not so degraded that I wish to poison those who are smaller than myself. The MRO street boys who come out from La Teja to fight at night are nearer to me than you can ever be. I grew up in La Teja. I was cadre myself in the MRO during university days. But, now, as an entrenched bureaucrat in the PCU, I no longer have the contacts you need. You see, the MRO does not trust the PCU. They view it as too established and too penetrated."

Well, at least I have a plausible report to bring back to Hunt. I am writing it in my mind as I listen: *Profound internecine mistrust between MRO and PCL. Cannot determine Left police sources without penetrating MRO.*

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



save mutual face.

"All right," I say, "you will not do it, and I will not threaten you. I accept your version; PCU and MRO lack umbilical connection."

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

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

This is the kind of bargain that can be struck.

"I will need two weeks," he says.

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

"Next week," Chevi agrees.

With that, he stepped into the hall, raised his hand in greeting, I suppose, to the retired tarts peeking out at him, and, waddling just a trifle in obedience to his increasing avoirdupois, made his way to the elevators.

That son of a bitch. I can assure you, he probably had the names already. By the next week, he came forth with a short list of three figures in the MRO, and Gordy Morewood was on the stick. In turn, by the following week, Fuertes had asked for a raise. And will probably get it.

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

Love,
Harry

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March 15, 1958

Beloved Man,

I am so glad you seem to have accepted my sermon on patience, since I cannot tell you any more at this point about Dracula's Lair. I have taken too many vows of silence concerning the matter and am just not able to find the sanction in myself to fill you in. Yet, I am still dying to send you letters. When is devotion ever so alive as in wholly private correspondence? Which we have, dear friend.

You took your courage delicately in hand and asked me about Alpha-Ego and Omega-Ego. I must have frightened you in the past for stepping on my preserves! How decent it is of you to live with my theories when everyone else has decided they are last year's intellectual fashion.

Well, it is interesting that you fix on this aspect of my work. Do you know that is where I began? The first crude questionnaires I laid out to try to locate the separate properties of Alpha and Omega did focus on their separate egos. I had an insight at the time, you see: The best approach would be by way of memory tests.

It was an interesting concept. Memory, after all, is often sinister. Nothing within ourselves betrays us quite so much as memory, and ego, I came to decide, was the *overseer* of memory. It does not matter what we may retain at deeper levels; the ego controls the surface and so will distort a recollection if that is necessary to maintaining the ego's view of things.

Well, contemplate the hurdles to be faced with two egos, one for Alpha, one for Omega. No wonder people could not bear my theories. Yet, one characteristic was soon clear to me. Because Alpha and Omega maintain separate banks of recollection, memory was not going to be at all identical in them. Their respective egos have too many separate needs, and, given enough need, memory becomes no more than a servant of the ego—which, I expect, is exactly why the memoirs of successful men are usually so awful.

The easiest route, I concluded, to uncovering the distinc-

tive properties of Alpha and Omega would be, then, to study the respective development of their egos. I would offer each subject some material to memorize, then question him on retention. I expected to discover patterns of recollection coupled with the most surprising lack of recollection, and I did, but I also found that my test did not work with certain kinds of strong and ruthless people engaged in high-level work. They consistently broke the pattern. They had what I came to call *ultra-ego*. They could remember a hideous deed perfectly, and with no large signs of disturbance.

Consider, for example, the indescribably powerful psychic force that enabled monsters like Hitler and Stalin to live with the millions of deaths they left in their wake. At a more modest level, but not vastly more comprehensible, are those responsible for the deaths of thousands. It occurs to me not all too comfortably that Hugh can aspire to that category. Taken by intimate measure, Hugh's *ultra-ego* is curiously intoxicating to me, and feeds, I suspect, the impulse now driving this girl to become one of Dracula's ladies—an outrageous exaggeration, and yet not altogether. You see, I have never lost completely my presentiment that the transactions of the spirit underworld are very much connected to us here. In this vein, a man named Noel Field is most relevant to my fears. Do you know that I have days when I cannot think of Allen Dulles without invoking Noel Field's image, for he has been incarcerated in Soviet prisons for years and Allen put him there back in 1950. Very much with the help of Hugh.

Believe it, my dear husband did confide in me about this exploit. Allen, I learned, was made to look a hell of a fool by Noel Field back in Zurich during World War II. For some reason, Allen trusted Field enough to add his personal recommendation to the names of a number of Europeans proposed by Field for important jobs with the Allied armies. Many of them turned out to be Communists, and Noel, who had more or less known that, never informed Allen of their political bent. (Like many another Quaker, Noel Field did go in, I fear, for the most overweening permissiveness in dealing with Communists.) Well, Allen paid for that mistake in a number of ways, and never forgave Noel. But it took Hugh, in company with Frank Wisner,

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to come up with an idea how to pay this enterprising Quaker back. In 1949, we managed to get the word out to a few high Soviets that Noel Field was CIA. Pure disinformation. Hugh handled that part and, you may be certain, left no American signature on it. I expect Dulles, Wisner, and Montague assumed that just as soon as Field took his next Red Cross or CARE trip over to Warsaw he would be imprisoned as a spy and some of his close Communist cronies might have to suffer a bit along with him. It went, however, a lot further than that. Stalin was hopelessly insane by then. Field was thrown incommunicado into a Warsaw jail cell, and before the affair was over, just about every Communist with whom he had had dealings, plus their numerous circles of cohorts, were either shot, tortured, or imprisoned for confessing to deeds they had not committed. Some put the number of Party victims at a thousand dead; some at five thousand. When I inquired of Hugh, he shrugged and said, "Stalin gave us another Katyn Forest massacre."

Well, I never knew whether to be proud of my husband's skills in this matter or aghast, and, of course, the Agency now engages in *levitations* that can be seen as amusing or scandalous, depending on one's point of view. Over these last years, we have certainly financed a number of liberal but resolutely anti-Communist organizations who set up a programmatic hue and cry to free the American martyr, Noel Field, from Soviet-Polish oppression.

Later, Harry, during that awful time when I passed through the loneliness of living with my own career failure, I began to think about all those Polish Communists who were falsely executed as traitors. Here was one more example of an evil masterpiece committed by us in the name, and, I believe, ultimately, in the cause, of good, but, oh, the anguish of the victims. I began to wonder if we had not touched some vulnerable edge of the cosmos. I hope this is not so, but I do fear it. I think of the frightful way Herr Adolf massacred millions of people in clean places. They walked into the gas chambers believing they were going to bathe their dirty, tired bodies. Get ready for hot showers, they were told. Then the fatal vents were opened. As I was going under in my own Easter madness, I used to feel as if I could hear those victims screaming in rage, and I began to

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brood on the possibility that when a death is monstrously unfair, it can send out a curse upon human existence from which we do not necessarily recover in full. Not altogether. Some days when the smog in Washington is inhumanly bilious I wonder if we are not breathing some baleful message from the beyond. You can see how disturbed I am still. Which of course leads me to brood on your dealings with your agent, Chevi Fuertes. What about his life? How responsible are you for what is happening to him? And to the people around him.

Well, I've gotten into awfully solemn stuff, have I not? Let us say I am feeling nervous about my upcoming venture which may prove no picnic either.

Would you divert me? I know it seems like a small request, but if Howard has indeed gotten around to taking you to one of those *estancias*, would you write to me about that little event? I like the social comedies you get into, and am certain any description of Howard Hunt cavorting with rich Uruguayans will be milk and honey for me—certainly much better than my paranoid fantasies that you are off on brothel expeditions.

Really! We all have to lie so much that a straightforward account is balm to the soul.

Love to you, dear man,
Kittredge

25 | I did not know if I wished to hear any more about lies. Kittredge's letter disturbed me, and I began to wonder whether some manifestations of ultra-ego were not often present in more minor matters. After all, I, who still saw myself as an honest man, had been lying concertedly to Hugh Montague, Kittredge, Howard Hunt, Chevi Fuertes, Sherman Porringer,

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and, worst of all, to Sally. For I had made the mistake, all those months ago, of hinting that love along some future tree-lined street was not wholly impossible. Of course, I was hardly in possession of any large funds of ultra-ego, since in her case, I certainly had to pay the price. My lie exploded on the day she saw a headless ghost gallop across my face in the instant I learned she was pregnant. After which, it did not matter what I tried to say; I was confirming what she knew already.

Our abandoned carnal relations began to rear up in my memory like a burned-out building. Sally made a point, when meeting at embassy parties, to be concertedly nasty. Such parties were now the sum of what I had for social life in Montevideo. On those even more frequent nights when I was alone in my hotel room, it would occur to me all too bitterly that I could not even boast of a bar I frequented regularly. We were not encouraged to—CIA men were always potential targets for kidnapping and torture, or, at least, so went the premise. On those occasions when night work or an Embassy function did not have me occupied in the evening, I did not always know what to do with myself—people who work sixty hours a week usually don't. And now there were no late-night options for chancy play with Sally. Before her pregnancy, there had been evenings when Sherman, kept late at the office, would thereby free Sally and me to meet in my hotel. Now, at parties, she would choose a corner to rake me over with a quick speech or two. "Harry," she would say, "Sherman's become a hellion in bed."

"They say marriages go through stages."

"What could you know about marriage?" Sally would reply, and with a bright smile for the rest of the room, as if she were recounting the saga of a three no-trump, doubled and redoubled, she would add, "I bet you are a faggot. Deep down!"

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

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

I saw her soon after at the next Russian Embassy party. As

evening came to the garden, we were left again with our natural colleagues, the Soviets. In a reprise of our earlier evening, Hunt and Porringer and Kearns and Gatsby and their wives, and Nancy Waterston and myself, were still around at the end, and on this occasion Hunt obtained a long-held wish. Poking one stiff finger into Varkhov's chest, he said, "Georgey boy, I hear you are going to charm our socks off and take us on a tour of your embassy."

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

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

"Formidable presentation of czarist-era wealth," replied Varkhov.

We wandered about in these four medium-grand rooms with their high ceilings, extrusive gilt-painted moldings, solemnly profound old carpets, parquet floors, rococo chairs with faded champagne seats, and all the many portraits of Lenin, Stalin—still prominent was Stalin!—Khrushchev, Bulganin, Peter the Great, and hunting scenes. I found myself looking into Lenin's eyes and they kept looking back at me until I recognized that I was drunk on vodka.

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

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

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sink."

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

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

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

Now, Masarov gave his wink, and that was all, and we continued to straggle along with glasses in our hands through office rooms, becoming sufficiently separated from one another to leave me, for perhaps thirty seconds, alone in one of their cubicles with Sally Porringer, who was by now just pregnant enough to be looking prettier than ever, and Sally, with what had to be an accurate sense of the time it would take for the next person to reach our small quarters, proceeded to sit down, rock back in her chair, raise her knees and spread her thighs. She was wearing no panties, and my eyes, in consequence, were able to feast on the lost lands below. Then, with timing as precise as a dancing master, she put down her skirt and lowered her legs just as Sherman came along with Dorothy Hunt, but in that suspended interval, while showing herself to me, there had been time enough for Sally to whisper, "It's crazy being in these people's rooms," and I could have leaped across to her. The impulse to

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spring was so powerful that I was racked for days. I actually telephoned her. In fact, I made a fool of myself. She had touched some fatal spot between the navel and the groin. For the first time, I was tortured at not being able to have her, and Sally, in turn, kept assuring me through the receiver, "I won't bother to see you. Sherman is surprising merry hell out of me *todos los noches*."

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

"Well, keep eating," she said, and laughed merrily. What a stomper her rodeo dad must have been.

26 | I had never had such need of sex before. One night, I ended up going with—who else could it be?—Sherman Porringer to his favorite brothel, an eighty-year-old emporium in the Old City full of chandeliers and walnut-paneled walls. "Been remiss with the señoritas lately," he confided to me, "but that's because old Sally eats nothing but chili peppers these days."

Some supernatural weeks ensued. Supernatural was the word. Loose at last in Montevideo's brothels, enjoying such forays more than I expected, I found myself fulfilling whole panels of Kittredge's imagination, and often became as fond of the whore I took for a night as I had ever been of Sally. In the relief of knowing that it was sex I loved, Sally, poor girl—for I was now as mean in my memory of her as she to me—began to be remembered, poor Sally, as a randy mustang who would be honored best for introducing me to my true and natural estate, which was to love women at large. Kittredge might once have scorned my descriptions of Alpha and Omega at sex and in love, but my old thesis certainly seemed to fit the new life. Alpha

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sported with prostitutes, and Omega became the keeper of the dream, yes, Omega might still be in love with the exceptional Mrs. Montague, but that made me no sexual fascist, merely the wise proprietor of a home for two strikingly different individuals, the romantic lover who needed no more than a letter to keep love warm, and the sportsman who could hunt as intently as his father for female flesh.

Of course, flesh was not hard to find in the brothels of Montevideo. I knew the beginner's joy of unlimited game. There was a month or two when it was just so simple as that. Engraved on my retina, and imprinted on my loins, was the emblem of Sally's bare ass on a Soviet chair, and this conjunction of the superpowers was there to offer its libidinous funds.

If Porringer was my guide for the first night, and gave a running commentary on all the girls, "That squatty dark one is better than she looks, has a twat will like to jerk you off, it's got a grip," at which the short squatty one gave me a broad grin showing two gold teeth, and of another, "Has the prettiest pussy you will ever see but she only takes it up the dirt track"—a lithe, slim, and sullen girl whose buttocks were her most salient feature—"although, goddamnit," said Porringer, "why not?"—and poked me with his elbow as a tall beauty with the falsest color of purple-red hair came down the stairs. "This one's got nothing to offer but her mouth, can't touch her down below, she's diseased, but the mouth is worth the rest, and penicillin will keep you blessed," whereupon he began to guffaw and slugged his beer. He was a ranch hand in a brothel. His family had been out there in Oklahoma before the 1889 land-grab—as I was to learn on this night in the Arboleda de Mujeres, what a Female Grove!—and I even had an insight into Sally and Oatsie's roots, generation unto generation living on those long, mean plains where the hound of austerity rode in with the dust (or so I conceived it, knowing nothing of Oklahoma but the little I knew), yet, as I saw it, simple human greed had been so deprived of satisfaction out in those lands that it worked itself all the way back to the last human nerve, the one that leads to our soul. Greed, after generations of being denied, had erupted into the hog, Porringer, and the sow, Sally, yes, I was not kind about the wounds I had taken, but my sentiments would hardly bother

Sherman. He saw himself, good yeoman legionnaire of the American empire, as owning the females in the countries through which he traveled, good finger-licking food for his omnivorous cock. Or was I, all regional differences to the side, close to describing myself as well?

Even as I was buying my hour from one girl that night, and a second woman for a second hour, and feeling freer with these strangers than in all my twenty-five years of Park Avenue, Knickerbocker Grays, Matty Saints, punch bowl at Morey's, et cetera, et cetera, maybe the taproot where my greed was stored was pouring out at last into the American Century, and I too was out there copulating for the flag. Greed having transmuted itself into a more noble emotion, I felt a glow of inner power, as if I were finally attached to the great wheeling scheme of things.

During this spell of nightlife, I went to mansions that must once have been as grand as the Russian Embassy, and to sheds on the edge of shack towns where the streets were unpaved and the loose tin roofs offered percussive effects when the wind blew. I visited parlors with bedrooms in high-rise apartment houses out near Pocitos Beach, and once, coming home from Hunt's villa in Carrasco, I found a well-appointed brothel in the shadow of the famous Carrasco Casino and Hotel where the girls looked as lovely to me as Hollywood starlets, even if the one I chose (because her nipples pointed most astonishingly toward the stars) offered but an austere Spanish sense of reciprocity and approached no earthquake force with me.

Another night in a cellar whorehouse on a medium-poor street where the oak tables were bumpy with the welts of initials carved across the grain of other initials, I ended up with a short, fat, merry girl whose black eyes gleamed with expert mischief. She was delighted she had caught herself an American and proceeded to explore with her tongue every crevice I had counted as my own and a few I did not even know were there, until even Omega was stirred out of his Kittredge-loving quarters, and I felt as if I were coming all over town and knew afterward as I held that merry little fatso in my arms how men could end up married to girls with but a single skill.

I loved the decor of the brothels. They could be clean or dirty, lavish or bare, bars or sitting rooms, but the lights were

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invariably soft, and the jukeboxes, which were almost always an extravaganza of colored bulbs and cascades of neon tubing, looked like little frontier towns unto themselves. You could gamble with your money, your heart, your ego, and your health. In the months that followed, I would come down with gonorrhea twice and syphilis once, but Montevideo was not Berlin, and you could trust any doctor on any street to treat you without a report. In Berlin every adventure had seemed to bear a likely cost, payment virtually in advance—here, in a part of the world where silt-filled tides lapped quietly on the shore, infection was the concomitant of a good tour.

Needless to say, this exploration night after night was only possible because a part of me was now more in love with Kit-tredge than ever. Since I no longer deceived her with one hard-as-clay little American cheerleader, but rather surrounded her with a full chorus of her own sex—even if they were, for the most part, poor and South American—I felt no shame. On the contrary, I was full of interest, for I was proceeding on the assumption that women who looked alike would make love in similar fashion—and it may be as good an hypothesis as any other. I could even tell myself that this quickly acquired loss of innocence would be excellent for my future work in the Agency. Knowledge of people was part of the power, after all, to do one's job.

If I did have an initial period on going into brothels alone with my courage racing as fast as my heart, full of fear that I, as a CIA officer, was open to kidnapping, ambush, torture, or entrapment, such anxiety was soon replaced by the recognition that vice and violence were commercially antipathetic—nowhere in the world was a bad drunk more unpopular than in a Montevidean brothel. If I had also learned the low trick of tipping the bouncer, that merely certified I was knowledgeable and American. The true peril, as I soon discovered, was not peril but loneliness, corrosive visits to loneliness. Soon enough, it began to arrive in the middle of a drunken spree. There was one such night in a cheap whorehouse called El Cielo de Húsar near the docks, and this Hussar's Heaven was a dilapidated and very old house of the early nineteenth century which must once have kept horses in the living room, and so reminded me of the Stable in

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own. Here, however, were gaps in the molding and rat in the walls; the swaybacked beds had dirty blankets at the whores were morose. If I was there on that night, because my mood was no better, and I made love to my surprisingly perfunctory performance considering how I took the act by dint of paying for it (penurious were my hard habits concerning the hard and the crisp). Usually to choose women who brought a modicum of art or to this possible desecration of eternal sacraments—I'd take the boy out of the chapel, I said to myself, but I'd not take St. Matthew's out of the boy, I was as alone as drink notwithstanding. On the same afternoon, I had been curdled enough in my judgment to wonder if Sally Porringer and I could, all hazards recognized, be as man, woman, and new child, no, that was smashed thought of my child's head dented by the last phallic acts of my previous husband, Porringer, just so morbid had my life become, and were still with me that night in the Haven, while banging away on a piece of flesh. I decided that ravity had you in its grip when flesh felt equal to rubber mitts. Trying to force the semi-demoralized troops of my one more drunken hill, I could hear from the bedrooms on the side of me the long professional wail of two whores as they came in unison with their clients, or pretended to, their voices ringing out into the chill of the South American night—the one on my left screaming, "*Hijo, hijo, hijo,*" while the one to my right kept grunting, "*Ya, ya, ya.*" It was then I knew how it felt to be the loneliest man in the world. Laboring up the bare stairs for the pleasure reserved for me on this night, I dressed and went downstairs for a drink at the bar, which I did not finish—I was obviously coming to the end of my youth when I had paid for would not be finished—and left El Cielo to walk to the garage where I had taken the precaution of leaving my car.

On the way, I met Chevi Fuertes. It was not a coincidence, I felt. The sight of his wide and smiling mustache was a providential omen. I was no longer at the end of the street of my life, but merely in the middle of a bad street which had just taken an upward turn. We went off to the

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next bar to have a drink together and when that, after fifteen minutes, activated the dregs of my professionalism enough to sober me at the thought of being seen together in public, we decided to get into my car and take a drive out to Pocitos Beach to visit a dear friend of his, Miss Libertad La Lengua, who would not be working tonight, Thursday night, he said. I think I should have paid more attention to the way he said *Miss Libertad La Lengua*.

27 |

April 10, 1958—Late at night

Dearest Kittredge,

It's weeks since I sent a letter, but I feel in no rush to apologize. After all, you keep me on the outside of Dracula's Lair. I do have, however, something I want to narrate. You see, I have met Libertad La Lengua. The legendary Libertad.

Let me offer context. I was due to see Chevi Fuertes last Thursday evening, a miserable rainy night one week ago, and feeling so lonely for you I swear I could smell some of those mules who died in your parlor one hundred years ago. How far away Georgetown seemed. One feels at the bottom of the world in Uruguay, or, at least, such were my cheerful thoughts around the time Chevi Fuertes had the unforgivable audacity to call my hotel room. Of course, he put a handkerchief over his payphone mouthpiece, so I will admit I didn't recognize his voice. He's a scamp. He chose to talk in a lisp as if we were planning a homosexual romp. (God, what if the KGB had a tap? Think of all those gay agents who would be thrown at me in months to come. Hubbard, the jewel of the Andes!)

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

It purported to be a routine meeting. Of late, if you recollect, he has, in his own grudging way, been filling us in on the MRO but complains that he is being used as a finger man. Each name he provided of an MRO leader (four in all) was now in a hospital. "I am incommensurably stupid," Chevi told me. "There is no possibility that Peones and his goon squads are not working for you."

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

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

"Yes?"

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

"Yes?"

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

"Why do you say that?"

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

"I agree."

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

"Could it ever come to that?"

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

"Businessmen can always fall out."

"*Muy jocoso.*"

"*Jocoso?*"

"Very jocular," said Chevi. "She would urge him to betray

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your people only if it were worth her while. If the Russians, for instance, were to make her an offer she could not refuse, she would induce Peones to work with them."

"She must be impressive."

"Incalculably so. Once you meet her, you will appreciate what I mean. Her powers are unique."

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

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

"Do we need to?"

"No. She is expecting me."

"And who will you say that I am?"

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

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

"She has no interest in politics."

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

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

"And if I wanted to buy her services?"

"They are not services. They are offerings."

"Are you in love with her?"

"Yes."

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

"She is a courtesan. That is the reality. I accept it."

"Well, if she is a courtesan, I can't afford her."

"I would think not."

Kittredge, we actually speak to each other in this fashion. By the book, one is not supposed to be this friendly, but it is where we have evolved. Actually, he knows and I know that while I may go to a brothel once in a while—do not sneer at this simple need—I would never dare to get into the kind of precipitous financial transaction a woman of this sort could induce. More-

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over, it's potentially compromising. We have something of a file on her, courtesy of Western Hemisphere Division, enough to know that in Havana she had links to both sides, Batista, and the Castro underground. Yet this piebald set of allegiances is what decides me to accompany my agent on a visit. Hunt tends to be positive. He likes to go with a promising action. I can always tell Howard I went along to check her out. If she has any leftist sympathies that are still active, we need to know more about that. Contemplate the twists or kinks she could put into Peones' mind if she is half as powerful as advertised.

So we went over. She lived in another high-rise building a little beyond the apartment house where Boris and Zenia dwell. I am bewildered by the impulse that drives so many people who can afford something better to choose these blank high-rise habitations that look out over a placid, dun-colored sea—but do not quarrel with the high-rise impulse. It gets you up to the tenth floor, at least. Hers is the sixteenth floor, and a penthouse, no less.

On the way over, Chevi is in a most unusual mood, full of sudden impulses, nasty vapors. He has, for instance, insisted on our crossing of the Rambla against all the high-speed traffic, a dubious endeavor by daylight and downright dangerous at night, yet, he still feels righteous enough after all those self-induced perils to turn around and shriek at a driver who has certainly passed too close: "*Con mis sentimientos lo más distinguidos!*" sticking his middle finger into the heavens to accompany this wail of malediction. I wonder if he thinks it is effective curse-work? Then he insists we take off our foot gear, and we scuffle along the beach, cuffs rolled up, toting our shoes, path lit by the moon, and the well-domiciled surf rolling in on thin luminescent ripples of foam. I wonder why he is taking this detour until I realize he is going to describe sexual relations between Libertad La Lengua and Pedro Peones. For that, no ordinary setting will do.

"She said once," Chevi now tells me, "'No woman can know men so well as myself. I approach my visitor as an enigma in logic, a labyrinth. Each man has a lock to which only I can locate the key.'"

"Chevi," I protest, "Libertad cannot possibly talk that

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way."

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

"No."

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

I was sufficiently put out to reply, "Enjoy the absurdity of your life, and I will manage with mine." He roared with laughter. He had tweaked the short hairs of the Colossus of the North.

Well, I still did not believe Libertad spoke of locks and labyrinths. "Borges or no," I told him, "one human being cannot calculate another so closely."

"She can," said Chevi.

"How does she make love to you?"

"That is sacrosanct."

"So you choose not to prove your case."

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

"Yes, how?"

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

Kittredge, it's shocking stuff, and I'd rather not offer it in his words which made a point of testing my knowledge not only of Montevidean slum talk, but expressions he'd picked up in Harlem as well, argot like *pervy* and *soft pete*, *brand* and *porthole*, *ass-teriors*, *bummy*, and *the latter*, believe it or not. The Spanish was at least more functional. *l'agón de cola*, which I think is *caboose*, *seña de pantalones*, an awful image which pretty directly suggests the *breasts of the trousers*, and one absolute pit, *tubo de salida de gases*, which I'm sure you can translate, but, if not, *exhaust pipe* will do. Chevi delivered his description with an ongoing oscillation of giggles and sniggers that shattered my normal sense of his dignity. He was so full of sneaky guilt and glee. I expect it was his Catholic background regurgitating on him, plus all that Latin sense of scorn. God, are these Uruguayans fixed on flesh, and, of course, all flesh leads to the capitol of flesh, the buttocks. I know now where Latins think the Devil hides himself, yes.

Apparently, Pedro lays himself down on Libertad's bed, his cheeks exposed. Libertad, dressed in what Chevi describes as "elegant leather," proceeds to spank him. Pedro Peones, big as a walrus, laying out there on the bed, belly down over two thick pillows so that his backside looks, as Chevi describes it, "*como dos melones gigantes*," and she whips him lightly, stopping only when the pain produces a touch of froth at the corner of his lips. Then she proceeds to bite him, a precise little business which leaves the exposed area scalloped by neatly placed scimitars of teeth markings, after which, just as Pedro is singing away in some melange of sobs, pain, guilt, and pleasure, she croons, "Oh, Pedro, *mi peon*, *mi pene pequeño* (little penis, no less), *mi perdiz* (my partridge), *mi perfidia* (my perfidy), *mi pergamino* (my piece of parchment), *mi perla* (pearl), *mi permanganato* (yes, pomegranate!), *mi perniciosa pedazo de pechuga* (my nasty little bit of tit), *mi pelado culo* (my bald backside), *mi pepino Persa* (my Persian cucumber), *mi perseguidor* (my pursuer), *mi pêsico* (my peach), *mi pezuña* (my cloven-footed beast), *mi pétalo* (petal), *mi peonia* (peony), *mi pedúnculo* (my flower stem), *mi peste* (my plague), *mi petardo* (my fraud), *mi picarote* (my impostor), and with that, having herbified his ears with her alliterations, nipped his cheeks with her teeth, and flicked him with a whip, she bends over, murmurs "*¡aya con Dios, ya, ya, ya,*" and delivers, yes, Kittredge, one lingering kiss *sub cauda*, at which point, Peones, according to my informant, gives back in turn one great oath, "*¡Madre del Dios* and wets the pillows with his "*emisiones las mas cataratas*"—Fuertes' final flourish upon the proceedings.

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

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

"She informs me of her acts. That is her avowal of love. Of course, you cannot comprehend. In your country, your religious

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devotions, such as they are, have been voided of the profound human transaction of confession."

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

Well, I will withhold my description of Libertad no longer. We ascend in the elevator, ring the bell to her door, and there she is. I know only that I am in the presence of a creature. She is extraordinary. If the gleam of a candle's flame is pale blond, then she is more blond than fire. I see a halo of platinum hair on a heart-shaped dimpled face, her eyes deep and mysterious blue look at me out of fields of dark eye-shadow, and her mouth—ah, that crimson mouth is just a little too plump and too strong—I am staring at an angel with a heart like a honeycomb, full of sugar and greed. Such is my first impression. Jean Harlow is before me. My second is that she walks like no woman I have ever seen. "Hello," she says in English in a deep and husky voice, "please come in," and with that, turns from the door and leads us through her living room out to the penthouse patio where we stand by the balustrade and look down sixteen stories to the sea. She has done this quickly as if she did not wish me to view her face for long in the light. Perhaps she is older than I expected, perhaps ten years older than Marilyn Monroe, if at least twenty years younger than Mae West, but what a way of walking!—it need give precedence to neither lady. Her calves are exquisite, her thighs leonine. Time takes its own breath when she deigns to move. I speak of Harlow and Monroe and Mae West—she is of their party, that sexual party as sure in its essence as cash is green. Cash says, "I am money, first, last, and always; I am more tangible than all of you who are staring at me." So Libertad is an avatar of sex. I feel as if I am in the presence of a goddess, and I comprehend for the first time what it must be like to meet a movie star.

Except, I must tell the truth. It is not agreeable but exorbitant to find her so unbelievably attractive. For the first time since meeting you at the Keep, I have been wholly overtaken.

Mind you, all she said was "Please come in." Now, on the balcony, she reaches into a silver purse that matches her silver lamé gown. (This cannot be the outfit she wears with her

whips—no, she must have changed for us.) She can hardly withdraw her cigarette from her purse, however, before Chevi is on her with his lighter. He gives fire. She draws it in. The passage is as continuous as a devotion—I think of an Episcopalian chaplain at St. Matthew's who used to make the sign of the cross with so great a concentration upon the agony of the Lord (at least such was the chaplain's expression) that you could feel the self-same agony in your chest when his outstretched arm drew the horizontal; now, I am overcome at the solemnity of a cigarette lighter brought to a tip of tobacco; I have never been in the company of a woman so profoundly feminine. I feel as if I have an image at last of the high priestesses of antiquity, and so Chevi's description of her goings-on with Peones appear distorted to me now by the comic violence implicit in such narration. Those were Devil's sacraments Peones was receiving. I feel as if I am on the edge of betraying myself forever, I know not how. I study her smallest move. The arts of all the attractive women she has ever encountered seem to have been absorbed in her person. She must be wholly an Omega. Where are the nicks and welts of a rough-hewn daily world? For that matter, I cannot take my eyes off her breasts. By the light that reaches to the patio, they seem large and wonderfully well-shaped, and mysterious in their cleavage, which is just as deep as her voice.

Soon enough I am obliged to realize that she is aware of my occupation; it is apparent she ordered Chevi to bring me.

"Do you like your work?" she asks me. There is a softening of the long *i* in *like*. She has a trace of Southern accent. "Your English is good," I reply.

"I learned my English from an American," she says.

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

"My protector," she repeats, as if the man will live forever with such cachet.

"A friend of the American Ambassador to Cuba," says Chevi.

"One of *yours*," says Libertad to me.

"I cannot conceive of any of my countrymen failing to be your protector," I say, but the remark goes dead. I wonder if her English consists of no more than thirty-eight useful phrases.

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"One of *yours*," repeats Libertad.

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

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

"Oh," I say, not without confusion, "he is, at the present moment, very much married." I confess that the thought of bringing about such an introduction has a sudden but curious appeal to me.

She shrugs her shoulder, a low gesture accompanied by a turn of the lip, as if to say, "What can that matter?" and she turns back to the living room. It is quite a chamber. She has furnished it in gussied-up copies of Queen Anne, Louis Quatorze, Duncan Phyfe, and Spanish Colonial. Gold leaf has been added to all the wood moldings. Whore cushions of satin are everywhere, and our feet stand on a wildly expensive, brightly hued rug whose only virtuosity can be found in the number of colors—God, what strength is in vulgarity! Her living room looks like a love nest in a furniture store window. Even the ashtrays are as large as fruit bowls.

She is still fixed on E. Howard Hunt. Is Mr. Hunt not an intimate of Benito Nardone?

"You are speaking of the politician," I ask, "who is leader of the Ruralistas?"

Chevi makes a sound of disgust. "You know very well that he is now running for President of Uruguay."

"Yes, I do know that," I admit.

Libertad gives a large smile. Her presence still seems a promise of payment. I am beginning to recognize that a courtesan, like an important athlete, is a single-minded force concentrated solely on its objective: she wants to meet E. Howard Hunt who will introduce her to Benito Nardone. Of course.

I reply, knowingly, "Nardone makes many noises now, but has no chance. The Colorados have been winning this election for the last hundred years."

"This year," says Libertad, "the Blanco-Ruralistas will win. Nardone will win. Your Howard Hunt will introduce me to him."

Her singularity of purpose is insulting to me. I have to recognize that she sees me as nothing more than one step in a connected series. Of course, her femininity still contains me in

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its cloud, but I wonder if I am not dealing with a force that is personal in touch, intimate in shift of voice, but, like the wind, there for everyone.

We are close to an impasse. I ask why she doesn't obtain her introduction through Peones, but then the answer is so obvious that she merely smiles. Nardone will respect her more if the meeting is brought about by our Chief of Station. So I merely nod ambiguously and stand up to take my departure. To my surprise, Chevi leaves with me. They embrace like old friends, and he pats her most respectfully and tenderly on the behind, then kisses her hand with a sweep of his mustaches. She, in turn, leaves a kiss on the corner of my mouth, at which my cheek becomes as alive as if it had been touched by a bird's feather. Then I recollect where her mouth has been this evening; my face burns like balefire.

"You will introduce me to Mr. E. Howard Hunt," she says.

"I will see what I can do," I am weak enough to reply.

In the elevator going down, I am already furious at Chevi. I contain myself and do not speak until we reach the street, but then I become the one who insists on crossing the Rambla against high-speed traffic. Even after we are across and safe on the sand, I am still laboring to control my temper.

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

"I," he says, "am devoted to your interests. I merely wanted you to look upon one of the few rare artifacts my country has produced, a work emblematic of Uruguayan genius—a great whore."

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

This anger, to my surprise, leaves him meek. I am wondering if I should have shown such a side of myself months ago. The trouble is that my temper is not a tool in dependable employ. "How could you be so self-centered, so stupid, so careless," I cry out. "You should be cut off!"

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

"Just remember that you are not indispensable. You are

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obliged to explain."

He does. We sit there in the safe house. After her living room, these grim government furnishings support me like a good starched shirt. I realize suddenly that my threats of unemployment have put no small fear into Chevi. We are now paying him one hundred dollars a week which, with expense chits, often comes to one hundred and twenty, or more, and he could hardly afford to give this up. That, however, is but half of his motivation—the other half is obviously connected to Libertad. "It is true," he says, after I slash through his disclaimers as if I am chopping brush, "it is true. I was attempting to make you of use to me, and, I agree, that is a breach. The fundamental relationship dictates that I must be of use to you. One should not violate the fundamental relationship."

"Why did you?"

"Because she requested the meeting."

"Then you have a similar relationship with her?"

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

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

I know why he chose to say those words in Spanish. They are not so hopelessly banal as "a soulless woman."

Kittredge, I may be developing the instincts one needs for this work. Chevi finished his tale of woe, put his head on our good cheap safe-house shellac-orange maple dining table, and began to weep. I said, "Why don't you stop lying? We are aware of where Libertad comes from. It is not La Teja." I was only pretending to be in possession of such a fact but, then, there was something askew in his story. It was full of that South American pathos which invariably depends on lovers who have known

each other from childhood.

"Well," he said, "there are many levels to the truth."

Kittredge, it is very late, and I am going to end right here. I did not learn the truth that night, indeed it took a good bit more, but I promise you that the facts, when I acquired them, were not ordinary. Be patient. I will tell you more in a day or two. I suppose I may as well confess to my annoyance that you chose not to tell me about Dracula's Lair.

Cheerfully yours,
Harry

28 | One more lie. The letter had not been cut short by a desire to chastise Kittredge. I simply did not know how to continue. After all, I had begun with the fabrication that Chevi had phoned me, and ever since, had been attempting to balance my account, a common practice in putting Agency reports together. If, for some reason, you could not send the truth back to Washington—if, for instance, you hired Gordy Morewood to do a specific job after the Groogs had instructed you to let him cool his heels, why, then, you gave Gordy another name, and paid him out of a new file. *Double-entry* reporting—an art! Rare was the field man who did not practice it on occasion.

Now Kittredge had been placed on double-entry. I had suppressed a critical passage between Libertad and myself. Wholly at her behest, I expect, Chevi had closeted himself in her gold and marble bathroom for a good twenty minutes during our visit, and in that time Libertad conferred on me one of her royal gifts—fellatio. We had not been alone for a minute before her fingers walked over the buttons on my fly. I will not give the details—suffice it to say that she exhibited such sensitivity to

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one's shifting states of tumescence that we did not get to the offering until Chevi had splashed enough water in bowl and washbasin to indicate he would soon be back with us—instead, she took me up and down a steeplechase of long and languorous hoops and loops. I might have discharged with sensations extraordinary enough to be hers forever but some residual Hubbard stubbornness, refusing to hand over the drawbridge to a stranger, was there like a mailed warder and slammed a gate in my soul; I came, to my surprise, painfully. Alpha, taken in whole, must have gone clear over the hurdle; Omega shattered darkly below. My loins ached when I was done and I buttoned myself quickly, whereupon she made a point of licking her plump lips as if seed were cream, gave a squeeze of her hand to mine, and kissed Chevi with considerable passion when he came back to the room. I was not about to pass all this on to Kittredge. Yet I hardly wished to mislead her by too much. That would once again violate the spirit of our correspondence. So I had given a fulsome description of Libertad's attractions, as if to communicate by that route the depth of the magnetic field her mouth and lips had put upon the nether parts. At its best, I had felt, I confess, like a superbly prepared canvas upon which a truly notable artist was laying the most purposeful strokes. To make up for any real loss in my account of—yes, I now knew the meaning—of such *exquisite* pleasure, I had exaggerated the initial impact of meeting. In truth, I did not feel in the presence of a goddess until her mouth led me to study the turns of expression on her face. All that beauty! All that hard implacable will to rule the world! I had seen hints of such on many another whore's face as she gave herself to fellatio, but never with such singularity of mission. As I would realize over the next few days, my iron-bound determination not to introduce her to Hunt was springing a few leaks.

April 15, 1958

Dearest Kittredge,

Libertad must have powers. For months Howard has been promising to take me along to an *estancia*, but eleven days ago, on Friday morning, directly after my encounter with Señorita La

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one's shifting states of tumescence that we did not get to the offering until Chevi had splashed enough water in bowl and washbasin to indicate he would soon be back with us—instead, she took me up and down a steeplechase of long and languorous hoops and loops. I might have discharged with sensations extraordinary enough to be hers forever but some residual Hubbard stubbornness, refusing to hand over the drawbridge to a stranger, was there like a mailed warder and slammed a gate in my soul; I came, to my surprise, painfully. Alpha, taken in whole, must have gone clear over the hurdle; Omega shattered darkly below. My loins ached when I was done and I buttoned myself quickly, whereupon she made a point of licking her plump lips as if seed were cream, gave a squeeze of her hand to mine, and kissed Chevi with considerable passion when he came back to the room. I was not about to pass all this on to Kittredge. Yet I hardly wished to mislead her by too much. That would once again violate the spirit of our correspondence. So I had given a fulsome description of Libertad's attractions, as if to communicate by that route the depth of the magnetic field her mouth and lips had put upon the nether parts. At its best, I had felt, I confess, like a superbly prepared canvas upon which a truly notable artist was laying the most purposeful strokes. To make up for any real loss in my account of—yes, I now knew the meaning—of such *exquisite* pleasure, I had exaggerated the initial impact of meeting. In truth, I did not feel in the presence of a goddess until her mouth led me to study the turns of expression on her face. All that beauty! All that hard implacable will to rule the world! I had seen hints of such on many another whore's face as she gave herself to fellatio, but never with such singularity of mission. As I would realize over the next few days, my iron-bound determination not to introduce her to Hunt was springing a few leaks.

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Lengua on Thursday night, he informed me that we would be off on Saturday to the *estancia* of Don Jaime Saavedra Carbajal. I can now describe such a weekend for you. It did have a few moments, and I believe I'll tell it as it passes: travel belongs to the present tense, might you agree?

All right, then! We take off on schedule, Saturday morning, with Dorothy in the back seat and myself riding shotgun, Howard driving his Cadillac as if it were a Jaguar, seat erect and far back, arms extended and hands in leather driving gloves holding opposite sides of the wheel. We motor north over a variety of inland roads, some in crying need of revampment, but a fast drive all the same of one hundred and fifty miles through South American towns usually sleeping beside a river, usually dusty, and rarely disturbed by any sound larger than our even-breathing Cadillac motor. On either side of us, the pampas begin to seem a veritable outer space of grass. Dorothy, napping in the rear, snores ever so faintly, no more sound to it than one fly meandering in a summer pantry, but Hunt's nostril quivers at this small public delinquency, and I think of Libertad. Perhaps there is enough of a crack in his marriage, I try to tell myself, to justify the introduction.

I can see why Dorothy sleeps. The land is flat. One can cover five miles before topping the low ridge that originally appeared to be but a half mile off; to divert myself, I keep estimating such distance while listening to Hunt expatiate. He is full of Fidel Castro these days. Western Hemisphere Division is receiving analyses to the effect that Castro may yet overthrow Batista, and Hunt is grumbling over the State Department's general lack of concern. "There's a Castro lieutenant called Guevara, Che Guevara, whom we gave safe passage to out of Guatemala along with Arbenz. That boy is more of a lefty than Lefty O'Doul."

I am counting the miles to the horizon. By mid-afternoon we arrive at the gate to the *estancia* which announces itself by means of two mournful stone columns, each twenty feet high and twenty feet apart, there to honor, I suppose, the pitted dirt road that takes us a long slow way to the hacienda. A thirty-six-hour party is commencing. Don Jaime, the wealthiest landowner in Paysandu province, is a powerful, sturdy man with a ram's

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horn mustache who exudes hospitality while his wife, cold and gracious, soon steers me into paying court to the young Uruguayan ladies present, much as if I were a nineteenth-century artillery officer at a tea party. Any romance with these protected señoritas would take three years of Sundays, however. Even the wives would cost you a year! Still, I flirt assiduously with the female folk of local ranchowners, local hidalgos, and local grain, feed, and mill owners as we all (that is, the men) get drunk. I'm surprised at the low level of the guests, which is to say that the money seems to have accumulated faster than the old family manners I had been expecting, but still there are gardens around the house, and agreeable half-wild copses of woods with paths, vineyards, arbors—it's easy to take our drinking into the evening. They imbibe prodigiously out here in the pampas, wine and Uruguayan cognac, rum, and—touch of class—Scotch. Don Jaime Saavedra Carbajal's house is low and sprawling, with cowhide for chair covering, and steers' horns for arms and backs. Of course, there's also dark Victorian stuff, long English hunting tables, mournful stuffed sofas, mahogany cabinets, and atrociously second-rate family portraits. The carpets are old orientals topped with Brazilian jaguar skins, antique rifles are mounted above the fireplaces, the windows are small with many panes, and the ceilings are low. Yet the house is kind of imposing. I can't say how. It does sit ten miles back of its own gate, and you pass thousands of cattle in the endless meadows on the way from the gate to here, not to mention guest houses, gardens, sheds, and barns.

The male company spends a good part of Saturday evening talking about horses, and Sunday morning we all go out for a pick-up polo game in a surprisingly well-groomed, close-cropped meadow with goal posts. I have all I can do to get out alive. The competition, while spotty—one or two real polo players, in addition to several fine horsemen of whom Hunt, I have to tell you, is one—are filled out by a string of substitutes like myself who are brought in and removed more quickly than the polo ponies. Howard, if you recall, had given me some elementary instruction on the polo field in Carrasco, but under game pressure I am in trouble. I can get mallet to ball with my forehand, but am just about hopeless for backhands. Hunt takes me

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aside to whisper, "Don't try to hit anything on your left. Just go stirrup to stirrup with the other fellow's mount and ride him out of the play."

I follow his advice and discover that if not always successful, at least I'm beginning to have fun. This is the most rough exercise I've taken on in more than a year, and I love it. I can feel my father's combative blood (which, for me, may be what happiness is all about). The moment I'm maneuvered off the ball, I gallop gung-ho all over the place trying to find the man who cut me off. These epiphanies of martial lust, horse to horse, man to man, come to their climax when I'm chucked from my steed pretty abruptly and land on my back, all the wind knocked out, a most curious sensation of choking passively as chargers veer overhead, their hooves going by like sledgehammers. God, even in my breathless state I saw the eyes of the horse who came closest to running me over. He, too, had a divided heart, half in panic that he would hurt himself, half in a fury to charge right through my supine feast of torso.

Well, I had to take the next two chukkers off, but when I returned to the game (which involved getting my will in hand), the wives and daughters and older *hidalgos* on the sidelines, and the players and the substitutes, all applauded, and Hunt came up to put his arm around my shoulder. Suddenly, I am in love with myself, with risk, with all the revelations of pain. I ache all over and feel virtuous, but it is obviously the high point of my day.

On Sunday night, however, after the barbeque, is the event of the weekend. Benito Nardone arrives. Possessed of a high forehead, a pronounced widow's peak, long nose, and sensuous lips, plus dark, V-shaped eyebrows and large, somewhat haunted dark eyes, Nardone was not at all what I expected. At worst, he looked like the classiest gangster on a movie lot. Am I thinking of George Raft?

Nardone makes his speech in the library as the men gather around brandy and cigars. Atmosphere is solemn—black leather tomes in near-black wooden bookcases. I decide that Nardone, son of the people, his father an Italian longshoreman from the docks of Montevideo, appeals to this group precisely because he is not one of them—he has no money, no family to back him, no

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title: by their lights, he should be a terrorist or a Communist, but he quit his youthful ties to that left-wing world and has become the leader of the right wing. As he swings into the core of his fund-raising speech, I can see the ball of money rolling downhill with more and more pesos adhering to it, for he knows how to talk to the center of fear and wrath in all these *hidalgos* and *hacendados*: They love to hear what they want to hear—I am beginning to think that politics is built exclusively on the comforts of such cant. "In these times," says Nardone, "a working man no longer thinks of passing on to his family more than was given to him. On the contrary, the Uruguayan workingman's most searching inner question today is whether to retire with partial security at the age of thirty-seven, or with full economic protection when he is fifty. Señores, we do not wish to be, nor can we be, the Switzerland or the Sweden of South America. We cannot continue to support a welfare state that encourages such inanition."

They applaud him, and applaud a good deal more when he offers as contrast to the lazy, corrupt life of Montevidean officeholders, the hardworking, honorable, virtuous industry of the herders and simple farm people in the pampas, all true Ruralistas. Of course, I have been hearing all year from Colorado in the capital that the farm workers are exploited unconscionably by the landed gentry. This political side of the evening puts me, therefore, in a depression. I am obliged to realize once again how essentially ignorant I am about these matters, and even ask myself why I joined the Company and gave myself to it all these years—more than three years now—when I'm not really interested in politics, and in fact have exactly what I need in the way of understanding: For all our faults, the U.S. is still, I believe, the natural model of government for other countries.

Nardone may have picked up a whiff of my thoughts since he ended by offering "a salute to that great nation of the north founded and maintained by individual initiative." He was applauded for this too, of course, but not, I think, so much out of love for the U.S.A. as in recognition of his good manners toward Don Jaime Carbajal's foreign guests. Nardone, pointing to Hunt, then added, "This most distinguished representative of our friends to the north has often graced my understanding with

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his thoughts. My friend and fellow horseman, Señor Howard Hunt."

"Hola," cries that crowd.

After which follow billiards, snooker, and bed. I could have taken the opportunity to talk to Nardone or to Hunt about Libertad, but hesitated—indeed, I have been on edge all week-end with this. Curiosity intrigues me to help her; caution forbids it. Now, in the morning, we return to the city.

On the drive back, I am down on myself and decide that I have been living a most secluded life in Uruguay, but that is the way I want it. With the exception of the polo game, I did not really enjoy the *estancia*. The pampas on a daily basis would bore me. Oh, there were quiet vistas where a stream curved around a grove of white-leaved cottonwoods, and the sun gave a pale gold light to the tall grass, but I am also thinking of some of the villages we passed on the way back, shanty poor with tin roofs that banged like loose shutters in every strong breeze. There is a prevailing wind out in these pampas called *la bruja* (the witch), and it would drive me loco if I had to live out here.

Kittredge, I hope this letter proves satisfying to you. In the pampas, listening to *la bruja*, I wondered what your situation could be and whether you were in peril, trouble, difficulty, or merely suffering like me from some small dislocation of the soul.

Cheers, love,
Harry

P.S. Dorothy slept again on the way back, and this time I did bring up the subject of Libertad. When I mentioned that I had met her, Hunt's curiosity was aroused.

"How did that happen?"

I improvised a reasonably good tale to the effect that I had been introduced to her at El Águila by AV/ERAGE, our society journalist.

"I warn you," I said, "she is looking for an introduction to Benito Nardone."

"That is one request she can file in the department of idle dreams," he answered on the spot, but, a little later, he tapped me on the arm. "On reconsideration," he said, "I like the idea of looking her over. She may have some input to offer on Fidel

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Castro. How he disports *in camera*, so to speak."

We decided to make it lunch, Tuesday, in a small restaurant of Hunt's choosing, far out on the Bulevar Italia. Kittredge, I knew how the place was going to look before I saw it—sufficiently nondescript to ensure that no one Hunt was acquainted with socially would ever be there. In any event, we set it up for the next day, Tuesday, just a week ago. I've decided to be the last of the big spenders and will get off another magnum of a letter to you tomorrow night.

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April 16, 1958

Dearest Kittredge,

Lunch began with a most unexpected turn that I should have anticipated. Libertad did not, as had been arranged in advance with Chevi, come alone; to the contrary, she walked into the restaurant accompanied by no less a personage than Señor Fuertes himself.

While Hunt has never met Station's starring agent AV/OCADO (since, thankfully, there has never been a crisis pressing enough to justify bringing them together), I can promise you that I went through a bad moment. Even though Hunt seemed to accept Libertad's description of her escort—"My friend and translator, Dr. Enrique Saavedra-Morales"—I had to keep issuing injunctions to myself: "*Stop seething. Stop seething. Cool down!*"

All the while, Libertad glowed. Hunt may even have melted a drop in the face of such incandescence. "Señorita," he said in his best Spanish, "I admire your language and choose to speak in it more than is wise for me," whereupon she laughed en-

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couragingly. "Perhaps my command, such as it is," he went on, "will dispose of the need for a translator, although I welcome your friend, Dr. Saavedra. I would ask," he said, turning to Chevi, "whether you are related to Don Jaime Saavedra Carbal?"

"A distant relation," said Chevi. "I do not know whether he would acknowledge this poor branch of the family."

I could have been in a heavily loaded airplane which now, at the very end of the runway, has just managed to take off.

We ordered. It was precisely the sort of low-priced middle-class restaurant I had foreseen. The menu was limited, the linen, while not quite yellow, had certainly said farewell to white, the tables were occupied by no more than a few local businessmen at one end and two middle-aged ladies of modest income at the other, and the waiter looked to be mired in debt and old lottery tickets—yes, Hunt had chosen an eating place that would be oblivious to the unorthodoxy of our meeting, or any other.

On the way over he had said, "Does Libertad know my name?"

"No question of that."

"And my function?"

"I would say so."

"Then I will have to inform Peones of the meeting."

"Must you? I don't think she will say a word to him."

"No, she won't, will she? Nothing to gain from that."

"No, sir."

He clicked his tongue once. "Well, we won't allow this one to become a folly," he said.

Under the circumstances, you can predict how much room he offered Libertad to trot out her better tricks. Obviously, the first item on her agenda was to excite the gallantry of Mr. E. Howard Hunt, but the lady's charms kept rubbing against the given: Glamour, when unattached to social prominence, has rapidly diminishing impact on Howard.

After his first speech, therefore, he came down to business quickly. We were hardly into our martinis (which Howard insisted on mixing himself at the table—thank God!) before Miss Paradise was being interrogated.

"What can you tell me of Fidel Castro? Did you meet him

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in Cuba?" Howard asked.

It was too soon. Chevi allowed his eyes to encounter mine for the first time since we had sat down; his expression was as miserable as my inner sentiments.

"Yes," said Libertad. "Fidel Castro is now in the hills."

"Yes," said Hunt, "I know that."

"In the Sierra Madre of the Oriente," she said.

"Exactly," said Hunt. "But how did you meet him?"

I was embarrassed. Interrogation might not necessarily be one of Howard's skills, yet he could certainly do better than this. There was no preface and certainly no encouragement. Not even the promise of a look did he allow to pass between Libertad and himself.

All the same, she tried to be forthcoming. She was prepared to pay cash. "Fidel Castro," she said, "had a romance with my dearest friend in Havana. Of course, now that he is up in the mountains, my close friend does not see him as often."

"But she does see him?"

"On occasion he slips into Havana. It is then they make their visits."

"What else does he do in Havana?"

"I am informed that he raises money and speaks to groups."

"Did you attend any such meetings?"

"Only once, but for the purpose of being able to tell my grand friend, Fulgencio Batista, exactly what was being stated. Señor Castro spoke like an angry revolutionary and said, 'Fulgencio is supported by the Yankees.'"

"You heard him say that?"

She nodded profoundly.

"Do you know Señor Castro well in any other manner?"

"During my sojourn in Cuba," she said, "I lived with but one man, even as now I live only with your friend whose name I do not need to speak."

"No need," agreed Hunt.

"I am loyal to the man I admire. A matter of principle."

"Commendable," said Hunt.

"So, señor, I have no intimate knowledge of Fidel Castro. But my girlfriend," Libertad now said in English, "*told me plenty.*"

"All right," said Hunt, "Let's move on to the *nitty-gritty.*"

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Libertad gave a smile of comprehensive wisdom. "He is like other men," she stated.

"Could you enlarge on that?"

"He is young and strong. A little shy. He talks politics to the women."

"Does this come directly from your girlfriend," asked Hunt, "or is it general gossip?"

"*Nitty-gritty*," said Libertad. "He is like other Cuban men. He is selfish. It is all over once he is done. He is normal."

Hunt did not look impressed that for his pains he had obtained no more than the knowledge that Fidel Castro was normal.

"How often," he asked, "does Castro come to Havana?"

"Perhaps once a month," said Libertad. She sighed as if to suggest that she had said enough, and Chevi now spoke. "Would you say that you are dissatisfied with the information my dear friend, Señorita La Lengua, has provided?"

"I would be satisfied with any response from a lady as charming as your companion," Hunt replied, "yet, by the light of my sources, Fidel Castro has not come down out of the hills in the last two years."

"Since Libertad La Lengua says he has been in Havana," said Chevi, "I would be prepared, señor, to go beyond your sources."

"Oh," said Hunt, "I will certainly honor the lady's opinion. We will make further inquiries."

Chevi said, "A wise course."

Silence. Libertad entered the void. "I have heard," she said, "that your friend Benito Nardone is a lonely man."

"He seems busy enough to me," said Hunt, and laid his hands on the tablecloth, fingers extended like rays, as though to ward her off.

She, in turn, placed her hands on Hunt's fingers, a move I would not have chosen. "I want you," said Libertad, "to tell Benito that he is the most attractive man I have ever seen. I speak not merely for Uruguay but of all countries I have visited."

Hunt extricated his fingers. "My dear," he said, "I could bring him fifty such messages from ladies virtually as attractive as yourself, but I don't. That is not the basis of our relation-

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ship."

Her eyes were lambent. "You would not do this for me?"

"You must," said Hunt, "be content with the wonderful strong fellow you have."

The pause went on long enough to arouse the miserable intimation that Hunt was going to get up and leave—his temper had been taken too lightly. Chevi inserted himself again. "Allow me," he murmured, "to speak of myself."

Hunt nodded.

"I am a poor professor of classics," said Chevi, "a man who must content himself with his powers of observation, for he occupies no greater place in the arena."

Kittredge, I could not believe Chevi's audacity. Bad enough to call himself Saavedra since Hunt, if curious, could check with Don Jaime concerning the less august branches of the family, but to be a professor of classics as well! If I recollected correctly, Howard, back at Brown, had taken several courses in Greek and Latin civilization. I can't pretend I was the least bit easy about our new direction.

"Observing you, señor," said Chevi, "I applaud your incisive spirit. You are a man who advances matters. So, this poor professor of Greek is ready, despite the gulf between your situation in life and his own, to buy you and your friend a drink."

"I accept," said Hunt, "provided I keep mixing the martinis."

"Yes," said Chevi. "You will mix the martinis, we will drink them, and I pay for this round."

In English, Hunt said: "It will all come out in the wash."

"Ha, ha," said Chevi. "A searching expression. I speak as an admirer of the American, not the English, tongue. It is rough-hewn, American, but an appropriate language. It is there to serve the soldier-gladiators of a new empire. But then, you are much like the Romans."

"With all the advantage," said Hunt, "of being closer to the moral concerns of the Greeks."

"Ha, ha. A wonderfully incisive point," said Chevi.

I was struck with his powers as an actor. Roger Clarkson, Chevi's first case officer, used to describe him as a ham, but Roger may not have been along on any improvisation like this.

Chevi now inhabited poor Dr. Saavedra. "Sir," he said, "I wish you to take no offense at these remarks, but I have been obliged to observe the peremptory fashion in which you dismissed the interest, admittedly ambitious, that Miss La Lengua exhibited in relation to Benito Nardone. I must remark that in my modest opinion you are grievously mistaken." Libertad nodded profoundly. "Benito Nardone," continued Chevi, "is a man of the people who has been obliged, by the dictates of his political career, to leave old friends behind. If he succeeds to become President of Uruguay, he will then be in need of restoring credibility with the populace. This need can be satisfied uniquely by Libertad La Lengua. She is a woman of the people who has become a lady, even as he has become a gentleman—"

Hunt cut him off. "Do you know, I think this is a nonviable analogy." Later, Hunt would say to me, "All Benito needs is a whore who still reeks of her police chief," but Chevi, nothing if not modestly telepathic, overtook him in turn. "I would submit, señor," he said, "that you are feeling some natural concern about the possible wrath of this lady's present protector, but I assure you, the personage in question would have to feel honored to lose the love of his life to the future savior of Uruguay."

"Yes," said Libertad, "Pedro would accept the loss."

"My dear," said Hunt, "I would not wish to discourage anyone."

Libertad said: "Many an Argentinian did not believe at first in Juan Perón and his Evita. Yet much of history was changed by that great lady."

"I could not agree more," said Hunt, "and I am certain that through your many sources you will yet meet Benito and you will charm him personally as you have charmed many an important guy before. Perhaps there will be a day when your dreams come through. I, however, cannot give a direct hand since that would be inappropriate to my role as a guest in your country." He had finished mixing the martinis, and now he handed her another, and smiled. "Let me offer a salute to your beauty."

"To her beauty," said Chevi, swallowing most of his second martini at one gulp.

"And a toast," said Hunt, "to a splendid fellow, Pedro Peones, strong, wise, highly motivated."

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"*Twenty-three skiddoo*," said Libertad.

We laughed hard enough to break the pall for about as long as we could laugh. The food arrived and it was not good. A rubbery fish fried in a somewhat rancid oil was served with a rice that clumped together in gobbets. The repast would make small inroad on the martinis.

Chevi was, by now, in a mood I could recognize. Back at the safe house, I would have been preparing for a temper tantrum. "Of all things upon earth that bleed and grow," said Chevi in English, "an herb most bruised is woman."

"What?" said Hunt.

"It is from Euripides," said Chevi, "from Professor Gibert Murray's translation of *Medea*."

"First-rate," said Hunt.

Chevi held up his glass. "I applaud your martinis."

"Bottoms up," said Hunt, and drained his glass. I had never seen him drink as much at lunch. It must have taken a few of his resources, after all, to be adequately indifferent to Libertad.

The lady had hardly given up. She sent a look to me, and I felt spineless enough, Kittredge, to nod solemnly as though I were in her service. Then, her toe found my ankle and gave it a nudge.

Chevi merely offered a smile. "Do you recognize," he asked, "how much respect I have for Americans? I value their great power and their confidence."

"You have expressed an opinion," said Hunt, "with which I am wholly in agreement."

"That is why I regret so clearly," said Chevi, "that one cannot have profound conversations with your countrymen. There is an impermeability to their insularity."

"Talk is cheap, we say," said Hunt.

"On the contrary," Chevi replied, "I prefer to quote from my beloved Greeks: 'Forge your tongue on an anvil of truth, and what flies up, though it be but a spark, shall have weight.'"

"Sophocles?" asked Hunt.

"No, sir."

"Pindar?"

"Of course."

"Now I am mindful," said Hunt, "of one of the more pithy

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remarks of Thucydides. It has just come back to me. In paraphrase, of course."

"Paraphrase is acceptable, señor. Thucydides, after all, is not a poet," replied Chevi.

"There are three deadly foes of empire," said Hunt. "One is pity, the second is the spirit of fair dealing, and—in answer to your desire to get me heated up enough to beat my gums—the third foe of empire is the enjoyment of discussion." He held up a hand. "Now, my country is unique. It does accept the yoke of empire that history has laid upon it, but we make every effort to break out of Thucydides' three iron rules of tyranny. We try to be compassionate. We attempt under grievous circumstances to be fair, and, for the last, I admit that I am just bibulous enough to like a good discussion."

I don't believe he was drunk so much as autointoxicated. Both of them were. It was as if they were ready to love each other, or fall off a cliff while grappling together, but the air between having been washed by two double martinis, they had lost all interest in Libertad or me.

I must say that I, in turn, was just drunk enough to be obliged to restrain my impulse to say proudly: "Howard, this is our number-one agent, AV/OCADO." Never again do I dare dry gin on slippery footing.

"Empires," said Chevi, "must, however, establish an equitable relationship between gods and men. For it is the nature of both to rule wherever they can."

"Agreed," said Hunt. "Self-evident."

"Of course, if there is but one God, He will certainly condemn you for overweening pride."

"Hubris," said Hunt. "I don't see my country as suffering from that. Never forget," he told Chevi, "that we are in the American Century because we are obliged to be. A good nation of great yeomen has taken up the yoke, sir, in the war against Communism, the war of Christianity against materialism."

"No, sir," said Chevi. "Communism is merely your excuse. You have an empire to lose, but you do not know who you will lose it to."

"Sir," said Hunt, "are you suggesting that we are hated in unexpected quarters?"

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"Yes."

"Well, that used to be the burden of power for the English. Now, it is ours. I will tell you, Dr. Saavedra," said Hunt with all the dignity implicit in great alcoholic clarity, "we wouldn't want friendship coming to us for too little."

Libertad yawned.

"Bored?" asked Hunt.

"No," said Libertad. "We must go up to my penthouse and drink *beaucoup* toasts to each other."

"In truth," said Chevi, I do not know that I would wish to live in your empire. Sometimes I view it as a community of bees who cling to the leader in an ecstasy of enthusiasm and patriotism."

"Are we still with the Greeks?" asked Hunt.

"One cannot know where Thucydides ends and I begin. I am only Dr. Saavedra, after all," said Chevi.

"Doctor," said Hunt, "your last remarks concerning my country are rubbish."

"With your permission. I am Saavedra-Morales, a loyal Greek to your Roman, an epigone of the new empire, an acolyte of Batista and Nardone. Politically speaking, I am with you. That is because I have but one life and, upon consideration, you and yours are to my advantage. But when we have departed into the long shadow of history, your side, which is now my side, will not win. It will lose. Can you tell me why?"

"I cannot conceive why. You tell me I do not even know whom we are fighting."

"You don't. You and your people will never understand us. We are deeper than yourselves. We know the turning of the tide. When that unique revolutionary, Fidel Castro, first landed in Cuba in 1956, he lost all but twelve of his men. He was ambushed by the troops of Batista. Hunted by day, hunted by night, Castro and his people stayed with poor peasants. By the fifth night, Fidel said, 'The days of the dictatorship are numbered.' He knew. He could see by the humanity on the faces of the peasants who sheltered him that Cuba was ready for a profound change. You, sir, will never understand us."

"But you say you are with me," said Hunt. "If you are with me, who the hell is *us*?"

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"You may scorn my use of pronouns, but I live in the midst of them. *Us* are the dark people. Yes, Commander, the dark ones. Latins, Muslims, Africans, Orientals. That is *us*. You will never understand *us*. You do not comprehend that we are in need of honor. We wish to lift ourselves above shame. You see, sir, there are times when persons like myself feel as if we have sunk so low that we cannot recover our honor. If I strive to perform some act that is good or brave, I discover even when I succeed that all I can receive in my heart for such a worthy act is a temporary remission from the pervasive presence of shame. My honor has been lost forever."

Hunt nodded wisely. It would take a larger wave than the embodiment of Dr. Saavedra to wash him away. "It is not our American civilization," he said, "that excites your misery, but your own sin, fellow. As above, so below." He handed a martini to Chevi and filled his own glass with the last of his mix in the pitcher. "Let's get to the facts," said Hunt. "You sit here and drink my liquor and make a big powwow speech about the dark ones. Well, how do you know, pal? Darkness of complexion may reflect something dark and self-destructive in the soul. The divine intuition may be trying to inform us of something. Ever hear of the sons of Ham?"

"Yessir, it is racial superiority that one always comes back to," said Chevi.

"No, sir," said Hunt, "it is character. I would like to tell a story."

Chevi waved his hand languidly. The exigency of gin had descended finally upon him.

"You talk—I listen," he said.

"Aren't fading, are you, pal?" asked Hunt.

"Trot it out," said Chevi.

"This concerns my father," said Hunt, "so I think we can slack off on the tension here."

"I sue for your pardon, señor."

"I accept. I thank you. I can say that my father has been an honorable man," said Hunt. "A lawyer. In later life, a judge. A good father. He taught his son to fish and to box, how to ride a horse, how to shoot. Once, when I was ten, we were driving on a back road through the Everglades in Florida."

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"Yes," said Libertad, "near to Miami."

"We came across a large rattlesnake sunning itself on the edge of a ditch. My father stopped our vehicle and told me to retrieve my brand-new repeating .22 rifle, purchased the day before for my birthday, out of the car trunk. I discovered, however, that it was too heavy for me to hold, aim, and fire. Before I could panic, my father took the gun, laid the sights on the rattlesnake's head, and encouraged me to pull the trigger. That snakeskin is still on my wall." He nodded. "And I still remember the bond of trust and affection I felt for my father as a ten-year-old boy."

Kittredge, I was pretty drunk myself by now but not so washed out that I couldn't remember that Hunt had used a longer version of this same speech—for, God, it's a speech!—a couple of nights ago at the *estancia* after Nardone asked him to say a few words to the assembled group. Now, Libertad and our good Dr. Saavedra were on the receiving line. I thought it was kind of crass for Hunt to repeat himself so soon in front of me, but he did pass along a wink. I must say his eyes were illumined by the gin; dammit, he was a luminous figure.

"Yes," said Hunt, "my father was a brave man. His law partner in Florida once absconded to Havana with a sum of several thousand dollars. My father merely transferred his Browning automatic from his desk drawer to his pocket, bought a ticket on the Pan American plane leaving that very night for Havana, made a tour of the bars, and found his partner in Sloppy Joe's, a notable emporium. Whereupon he walked up to the fellow, put out his hand for the cash, and was returned all of the essential that had not yet been lost to women, drink, and the crap tables. A compassionate man, my father. He did not prosecute his former associate. He would even share a drink with him in later years."

"*Fenomenal*," said Libertad.

"All right," said Hunt. "Today, in Carrasco, two streets from my house, lives Colonel Jacobo Arbenz, who has recently returned from the Iron Curtain country of Czechoslovakia. I speak of him because I helped to overthrow him and his Communist-sympathizing government in Guatemala four years ago."

"*Qué golpe, maestro*," breathed Libertad.

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"Now Colonel Arbenz and I nod to each other at the golf club. These are curious and would-be liberal times, but I will never agree that that gentleman with his Communist sympathies can be my true neighbor. I always think of his father. Colonel Arbenz's father, you see, committed suicide. He filled his mouth with water, raised a pistol to his lips, and pulled the trigger. This mode of self-destruction guarantees the most prodigious disarray of after-effect." (I translate, Kittredge, from Hunt's Spanish—*el desarrenglo prodigioso después del hecho*—a linguistic display!) I must say Howard could not keep a grin off his face, but then Libertad actually made a low noise in her throat.

"Señores, señorita, I relate this fact not to take pleasure in Colonel Arbenz's family misfortunes, but to point out that the differences between our fathers is kin to the difference between the separate philosophies of freedom and authoritarianism.

"So I say to you, Dr. Saavedra, that I reject your notion that my country would ever wish to deprive you and the various peoples and nations you claim to represent of anything remotely resembling that inviolable human essence, honor itself. No, sir. My father, you see, brought me to the Greeks, and thereby, in college, to the study of the classics. He even obliged me to memorize one great statement by Aristotle. Yessir, Aristotle told me that there is a life out there higher than humanity: Men can only find it by discovering that particular something in themselves which is divine. Are any of you feeling sober enough to keep up with this? I quote: 'Do not listen to those who exhort you to keep to modest human thoughts. No. Live, instead, according to the highest thing in you. For small though it may be in power and worth, it is high above the rest!'"

Chevi roused himself for one last charge. "No, sir, it is we, not you, who subscribe to the wisdom of Aristotle, for he is a Greek, that is to say, a human from the dark side suffused with reason and light."

Hunt went for his watch with that, called for the bill, added it carefully, put in his quarter of the share while I laid down mine, waited for me to sprinkle some small change for our half of the tip, saluted Chevi, kissed Libertad on the hand, said, "You have a good, firm hand, my dear," and walked out with me, but not so quickly that I could avoid a last look from Libertad. She

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showed no suggestion that she would ever care to hear from me again.

We stopped at a café to drink three cups of espresso each, followed by two tablets of sen-sen, but I will not pretend much work was done by either of us after we returned to the Embassy. By five, I managed to phone Chevi at his law office, woke him up, and told him to meet me at the *law library*, which, by our understanding, is nothing less than the safe house we keep in the high-rise above the Rambla. I can promise you that a few disclosures are to follow, so I will continue with another letter tomorrow.

Yours, as ever,
Harry

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April 17, 1958

Dearest Kittredge,

The encounter with Chevi at the safe house went on for hours, but I will spare you the early portion which consisted of my belaboring him not only verbally but actually coming close at times to hitting him physically. He is absolutely maddening. He tried to excuse himself for coming along with Libertad on the ground that he was there to protect me. "It would," he kept saying, "have been a disaster for Hunt to commence anything with her," and he nodded vigorously. "I will yet explain. She is not what she seems to be." Then he would say nothing for a while.

Yes, I could have killed him. I would have if I had not been too miserably hung over and too quickly sobered up, and it was

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all of an hour before I could feel enough human interest to ask Chevi where he had picked up his Greek erudition. It turned out that he had spent a few hours stuffing himself with quotations. "A whim," he said, "I did not wish to arrive empty-handed."

"But how did you know he would not speak to you in Greek? He studied it in college."

"He is a janissary. Janissaries retain no culture."

"You are mad."

"It was worth the chance."

I was angry again. "Do not tell yourself that you are out of trouble," I said.

"I recognize that I am not."

"You are going to relinquish Libertad."

"Oh," he said, "that is not truly necessary."

"It is completely necessary. Your fundamental relationship is with the Agency."

"Yes. You are my first and only."

"Let's be done with all this," I shouted. "You will give the lady up."

"May we discuss it tomorrow?"

"Hell, no," I shouted. "If you do not observe the absolute letter of this ruling, your termination is inescapable." I nodded profoundly. "Toward those who betray us, our justice is unstinting."

Actually, to terminate the relationship, means I'll be bombed by the Groogs. Why? they will ask. All the same, Chevi does not see through me. The use of such a word as *unstinting* certainly strike fear into a compromised heart.

"I will see her no more," he states suddenly. "I give her up as of this moment." I have no idea if he is telling the truth. It is as sudden as if a wall had collapsed. "I am going to tell you the truth and then you will see that I have indeed protected you."

I am thinking that we could turn him over to Pedro Peones. I am startled by how large my heart can feel when it is ice-cold. For the size of the fury I'm containing, I might as well have a boulder in my chest. Something in his lies disturbs me profoundly.

"You cannot begin to give her up," I say, "until you tell the

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truth about her."

He looks into my eyes. Our staring contest goes on for many moments and each of us takes turns at growing stronger than the other, or, should I say, less of a liar—I do not know. Finally, he says, "You do not know the truth, or you would never have asked for this meeting today."

"Until you tell me, I cannot compare your knowledge with mine."

He smiles at this evasion, but wanly. He is even more exhausted than myself. "I will tell you," he says, "because the objective reality is now clear. I must denude myself of her."

"Denude?"

"*Desnudar . . . privar . . .*" He finds it. "Divest myself of her. Indeed, I should not have supported her request to meet Hunt. When all is said, she is too impossible a whore."

Now he wraps his arms mournfully around me in a full *abrazo*, as if we are brothers embracing at a wake, and says, "Libertad is not a woman, but the female transformation of what was once *un hermafrodito*." He sighs so audibly that I receive all of his breath, and the dead smell of onerous responsibilities carried too long. Since I have shown little response—I think he is speaking in metaphors—he adds, "true and profound change. *Metamorfosis quirúrgica*."

"Surgical transformation?" I ask.

"Sí."

"Where?"

"In Sweden."

"Have you . . . ?" I want to ask if there is a passage. Stupid questions jostle for position in my brain. "You have a good firm hand, my dear," I can remember Hunt saying

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

"A sleight of hand?"

"Yes. *Prestidigitación*."

"Her breasts?"



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

"All right. I've heard enough," I said. In fact, I had been continuing the conversation because I knew that the moment I ceased asking questions, I would have to believe all that he said, and then I might be ill.

My emotions were so exceptionally crossed at this point that, Kittredge, I swear I could feel the simultaneous existence of Alpha and Omega, yes, Alpha, our own manly case officer out in the world of operations and paperwork had to wonder: Was he, himself, a homosexual? That stands out, doesn't it? To be so attracted to a transvestite, or whatever else you could call it, a transsexual. I writhe in the bonds of embarrassment as I write this.

Yet, another part of me knows that Libertad, no matter how low and sordid she may be, is nonetheless an evocation of the female spirit. Somewhere out there between *he* and *she*, Libertad has managed to absorb the quintessence of femininity! She is not a woman, but she has become a creature replete with beauty. She is all the beautiful women put together! By Omega's generosity of view, I could tell myself that I was not homosexual, but devoted to beauty, the beauty of women. Can you conceive of feeling such opposed emotions at once? Yes, of course you can, you are the only one who could.

Poor Chevi. Libertad is an agent in the world of women, and he is an agent in the world of men. So he can assuage his loneliness—for who could be lonelier than Chevi?—by being close to her. I was now forbidding that.

I returned his *abrazo*, full of feeling for him, and we had a drink while he showed me the pictures of his wife and son that he carried in his wallet. Both are sturdy, both are dark, his wife a woman of olive eyes and raven hair. The gloom of the gargantuan tasks that lie upon the Communist world are fully in her expression. She has monumental breasts, a woman who would run weighty operations—whether in a factory, a family, or a Party cell. At least, such were Harry Hubbard's concealed editorial sentiments. Chevi sighed again while looking at her—she was all he was going to have for a while. I felt a shiver in my soul. For both of us.

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No doubt you will find a surfeit of bathos in this. I do myself. Be certain I was content to drive him home without further ado, but it all returned with a headache so soon as I had reached my hotel. The question was how much to divulge to Hunt next day at the office.

Let me break for dinner. A little *churrasco*, sausage, and black pudding will build me up for the last mile.

Later

The next day, Wednesday, did not go quite as expected. I was prepared for a horrendous session with Howard which, if he considered AV/OCADO compromised, could bring on a thirty-six-hour stint with the Groogs on the Encoder-Decoder, but he was not at the office. Mid-morning, he called in to tell Nancy Waterston that he was going to accompany Nardone on a campaign swing for the next twenty-four hours.

"As for the rest of us," Porringer muttered, "we just keep to the usual dumb and daily."

Sherman was an unlikely ally, but, then, the virtue of a hangover may be that it freshens old clichés. Any port in a storm! Porringer, whatever his flaws, is not stupid.

We went out to one of those sprawling ubiquitous sidewalk cafés. Dusty metal chairs, coffee-sticky eating surfaces, ads for aperitifs on the awnings, ill-dressed housewives eating gritty ice cream, adolescents playing hooky from their lycée. I think the only place in the world where outdoor cafés really make sense is in Paris, but ours, alas, is not in Paris, but Montevideo, although it is named Café Trouville, no less, and must have seventy or eighty dingy little round white metal tables sitting on the sidewalk of the Bulevar General Artigas. That, as you would expect, is an artery of traffic. Such conduits in South America get named after generals. Avenida de General Aorta, Bulevar de General Carótida, Avenida del Almirante Cloaca. If these misrepresentations are needlessly cruel to Montevideo, a city which has never done me any harm, it is because on mornings such as this, a second-rate seaport can certainly serve as the representative cloaca of our filthy world. Or is this describing my awful mood?

After the first twenty minutes (which consisted of listening

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to Porringer vent his gripes about Hunt), I got down to business. What does he, Porringer, know about Libertad?

"There's very little I don't know about *her*," he states, and actually pats his stomach. "So, you open."

Yes, he has all the hincty nasalities of a successful graduate student who is sitting on more bibliographical references than you can ever muster.

I decide to take a chance and prime his pump. That will probably get him to pool his information. It is always difficult for Porringer to hold back on command of a subject.

I tell him, therefore, what Chevi told me about the sex change.

"Yes," he said, "I was debating whether to warn you about Chevi."

"Why didn't you?"

He shifted his seat. "He's your agent. I don't leave my farts in every lark's nest."

I was thinking he must have been waiting for AV/OCADO to blow up in my face.

As if he had read my mind, he added, "I didn't want to get the Station in a stir about Libertad. Nor do you."

"Can you tell me what you know about her?"

He nodded to himself as if Judge Porringer, having taken an agreeable recess, might be deciding in favor of the supplicant. "Well," he said, "I didn't like this business from the get-go. Peones could have any whore in Montevideo—I mean, he is more dedicated to rank pussy than I am. So what was he looking for in Cuba? It had to be a freak. It had to be. I sent inquiries up to Havana about the lady, and all I got back was cover-up. I checked it out, therefore, with a well-positioned friend in Western Div, but Libertad was back here with Peones before my pal could dispatch the primary material. I did learn that her Havana protector was a big Texas crony of the American Ambassador down there, and that was why we couldn't squeeze any juice out of Havana Station. A little later, I discovered—just a little too late—that Libertad was one more drag-queen hermaphrodite who had gone to Sweden to get her fire-hose turned inside-out."

"Inside-out?"

"You mean you are not witting to Swedish chirurgery?"

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"Can't say that I am."

"Live and learn. A Swedish sawbones won't just chop off your dick and testicles and hold out his hand for payment. These Olafs think they are virtuosos. They remove the inside meat, but save the outer skin of the sack and penis for the humanitarian reason that both swatches of epidermis are loaded with erogenous nerve endings. Then the surgical team cuts a new hole—which, I fear, leads nowhere—and lines it with all this premium tissue. Give me a Social Democrat every time, especially if he's Swedish."

He was like a water buffalo. Impossible to get him moving; once under way, no reason to stop. "I had," he said, "a few questions of my own. Here we were with Hunt. A Station Chief whose idea of covert action is to own the local cops. Howard is in love with Peones, and Peones is in love with La Lengua. And I am in possession of information that is going to be about as popular as syphilis on a petri dish. But you know me. I still want more. So I ask around in the local bagnios, and, kid you not, brother, they are ready to tell all. In her pre-Havana days, Libertad used to be named Roderigo. Roderigo Durazno, no less. A specialty act. Full penis and testes which he couldn't use for much, and full set of breasts. Kind of a centerpiece for orgies. You know." He put down his cup and grimaced. "This coffee is awfully sour." He waved to the waiter, pointed to his empty espresso, and said, "Roderigo wanted a sea change. Saved his pesos. Went to Sweden. After the operation, *she* went to Las Vegas to try out the new hole." (Kittredge, I can't help it. This is how he speaks. Think of him as a technician in Carnal Engineering.) "Well, Hubbard, her plumbing didn't function like the Swedish scientists had predicated. The new hole was too delicate to take the guff. Maybe some wires got crossed. And her back hole, which in days of yore in Montevideo had been the old reliable, was now, because of its proximity to the operation, not employable for anything but the evacuative function—which is what God intended in the first place until all us dirt farmers came along. So the good old days of taking it up the ass were done. How does she manage now? The whorehouse madams with whom she still pals around tell me she's got a trick with her hands can fool any man. I find that hard to believe, but there you

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are. She nailed her Texan in Las Vegas, he took her to Havana, and she kept it secret from him for many a month. He thought he had himself a dynamite blonde who loved to fuck in the dark. I don't care how much money a man makes, he can still be the stupidest asshole alive, wouldn't you say? How about a sandwich and a drink? This talk has made me hungry."

So we lunched at Café Trouville on *tapas* and *cerveza* and watched the traffic grind along. "Any time," he said, "that a hooker can fool a john by simulating a vagina with a little oil and five good fingers, you can count on it—she will brag. And other whores will brag on her. It must have traveled from Cape Horn to the Caribbean. Havana Station picked it up. Wonderful news for them. They had to tell the American Ambassador that his Texas crony was living with a surgical bombshell scandal. After they all came up for air, the Texan prepared to divest himself. In consequence, Libertad wrote a love letter to Pedro Peones, who used to know her as Roderigo Durazno. Now, when he saw nude photographs of her as a blonde, he went insane. Too bad I only found this out too late. Needless to say, Libertad makes me nervous. Any man born half a woman who gives his nuts and dick to the fishes, is not likely to say to the KGB, 'Go away, you are not a good Christian.'" He nodded. "That's my take."

I now asked the question I had been afraid to ask. "Does Howard know about Libertad?"

"You better get to understand Howard *and* the Agency. They're both old ladies. Grand old ladies."

"I'm not sure I follow you."

"Ever been in a room with a grand old lady when somebody toots? To tell the truth, I never have, but they say the grand old lady doesn't miss a stitch. The fart, señor, he do not exist."

"Come on, Porringer, Howard's no fool."

"I did not suggest he was dumb—I was saying he knows when to breathe. So long as Peones is the fullback who will always get us the three yards we need, Howard will choose not to be witting." Porringer burped. "Looks like we're coming around to you again, *joven*. Concerning AV/OCADO, I would say that I am worried, but not frantic. Analyze the options. I would assume Chevi is still reliable. Could you say there is any possibility that he is a double agent?"

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

"He led you to Libertad."

"True."

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

Kittredge, I've noticed the odd remarks that people do repeat on occasion. I wonder if it's not the double, if separate, assent of Alpha and Omega, a way of saying, yes, all of me is behind this, first Alpha, now Omega, both parties accounted for. "Yes," Porringer decided, "let's keep the lid on. You and me can live with this. We don't want to get Howard upset. He'll have to call in people from Western Division to look it over. On the other hand, if and when AV/OCADO blows up, you will catch most of it. Well, you certainly get it now if you tell, and, if you wait, it may not blow. Chevi, meanwhile, has to keep away from Libertad. He will, once you make it triple crystal clear that if he don't, his ass is in Peones' iron hands."

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

Let me conclude, then, with one odd remark of Sherman Porringer's. On the way back to the office, he said, "Satisfy one mystery for me?"

"Sure."

"Why doesn't my wife have a single decent word to say about you?"

"She told me once that she didn't like my accent."

"Oh, that could bear improvement, but I still don't get it. You may be nothing remarkable, but I guess you're half-ass okay with me. Even if you can't hold an eggshell."

Can a noble society be founded on the judgment of one's peers?

Love to you, dear Kittredge,
Herrick

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April 30, 1958

Harry, dear Harry,

Bizarre as your days have been, they seem normal next to my chores. I know I am being outrageously secretive, but I still can't tell you anything. I'm girded about with vows of absolute silence concerning The Project and hesitate to disturb any webs. I don't believe I'm thinking of Agency retribution. It's more a question of roiling the gods.

Angel man, I have this uneasy fear I may never be able to tell you. Then, on other days, I think, I'm going to burst if I don't pass it on. You must, however, not stop sending your letters. I love them. I particularly enjoy the way you describe certain situations as if we are sitting side by side. I know my correspondence has been one-sided lately, and it's going to get worse, I fear, because soon I won't be able to pick anything up at my letter-box—I will be far away from Washington.

Love, dear man,
Kittredge

p.s. More I think of it, more I come to the conclusion that you must only write to me on the first of each month, although keep being as generous with your pages, please. I've arranged with Polly to pick up your letters at the Georgetown post-office box so long as I'm away. There is, incidentally, no need to be concerned about her discretion for I've guaranteed, artfully, I believe, that she remain ignorant about thee and me. Since she has to see the name you put on the return address, don't use your own dear moniker. Put Frederick Ainsley Gardiner on the envelope instead. You see, I've gulled her with a tale. Otherwise, she'd suspect I was having an affair with you, and would feel bound to gossip about it. To forestall that, I've already confessed to her that Frederick Ainsley Gardiner is my secret half brother, natural son from a hole-in-the-wall affair my father had eighteen years ago. Dear young Freddy is now living in Uruguay where Daddy supports the old morganatic wife and his unseen but beloved bastard and allows them to use his last name. It's

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an awful thing to do to dear Daddy (although I suspect he's created such fantasies for himself often enough) but in any event, this is the sort of story Polly will believe. You met her at dinner once with her husband. He's State Department—remember him?—very tall and solemn as an owl, but sterling family stuff (if only he weren't so dull!). She's my old college roommate and, for a Radcliffe girl, absolutely ditsy about sex. Has affairs with conspiratorial panache, but does get loose-mouthed when she is impressed with the name of her lover. (Is that a common human failing, queries your innocent Kittredge who has only Montague's half-bald scalp on her belt!) Polly is having loads of hanky-panky now with Jack Kennedy, who, all the papers say, is going to make a serious run for the Democratic nomination in 1960. I can't believe it, not Jack Kennedy! From what I hear, that beau hasn't done a day's work in the Senate since he's been there, but one can't blame him—he's such a boon to the ladies. Polly does go on about her oh-so-clandestine *rendezvous*es with Jack. She's obviously not trustworthy at keeping her own secrets whole, but if she does blab about Frederick Ainsley, it'll lack interest. Who here in these ordinative D.C. swamps would care about my father's supposed pecadillos?

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

Love again,
K.

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

I might have been trying like never before to charm her with my letters, but now she was not going to write at all, and I was rationed to once a month. To avoid a plunge into the pits of depression, I spent my night hours in the office catching up with a myriad of Station tasks. Work became my diversion. For want of another, work became my best friend, and indeed there was an interesting couple of weeks revolving around our old nemesis in the Uruguayan Foreign Ministry, the enterprising Plutarco Roballo Gómez, saved from arrest almost a year and a half ago

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by the clamor of Police Chief Capablanca's sirens in the park. Gómez remained a high official in the Foreign Ministry, and no doubt, was still smuggling Uruguayan files over to the Russian Embassy. Although Hunt only arrived after the old operation was botched, he nonetheless did not let a week go by without reminding us of Plutarco Roballo Gómez, still free out there, still feathering nests for the Reds. Hunt's vein of venom about Communists was as immaculately personal as if he were speaking of his mother-in-law. I, no matter how much I wished to feel somewhat more combative, looked upon the Russians and ourselves, at least in Uruguay, as rival portfolios of stocks, but Hunt was as immediate in his reactions as one of those long-nosed basketball coaches whose team is doing poorly on the floor. In compensation, when a good operation got going, Howard gave off that special warmth only the sour-faced can bestow with a smile.

He started to smile about the time Gatsby got lucky. If intelligence officers tended to measure their respective importance at the Station by the penetrative powers of their agents, in much the manner that a serious hostess will calculate the desirability of her guests, I had, while running AV/OCADO, been holding the social honors and Porringer and Hunt could certainly lay claim to cultivating Peones, a prize heavyweight. Until now, however, Gatsby had been relatively unproductive, for he had only developed two medium-rank agents; the rest of his contacts were what Gordy Morewood called "rubbish collectors."

Now, one of Gatsby's middling sources, AV/LEADPIPE, a gold smuggler who operated through a border crossing between Uruguay and Brazil, informed Gatsby that he was on close terms with an official in the Foreign Ministry who could obtain Uruguayan passports. Did the Station wish to buy a few? We did. Acquiring foreign passports was always a standing Station objective. Yes, Hunt told Gatsby, buy five, and get LEADPIPE to give you the name of the official putting them up for sale. The name came back and it was Plutarco Roballo Gómez. Our office came alive.

LEADPIPE's car was enriched with a bug. In the next meeting, following Gatsby's instructions, LEADPIPE asked Gómez to

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repeat the serial number of each passport.

"Uriarte, you are young, successful, and enterprising," said Gómez. "Why do you take up our time with these clerical procedures?"

"Tarco," said LEADPIPE, "it is so much more agreeable if you aid me. My mind reverses numbers when I have to do it alone."

"You are mentally unstable," said Gómez.

"Inclined to madness," muttered Uriarte.

They bargained over the price. It was all there on the tape recorder. Hunt mailed a duplicate of this wholly incriminating tape to the editor of *El Diario de Montevideo* together with a package that included the five numbered passports; *El Diario* had a front-page story, and Gómez had to resign his post. Word spread through local government circles that the fall of Plutarco Roballo Gómez was due entirely to the efforts of the CIA.

"Secrecy," Hunt told us, "sometimes has to take a back seat to propaganda. Because of Gómez, we used to be the laughing stock of Montevideo. Now the locals perceive us as dangerous to our enemies, devoted to our principles, and just too damn tricky to keep up with. Let's maintain that image."

My good luck came next. Over at the Russian Embassy, we learned by way of GOGOL that Varkhov had been acting untypically. Five times in three days he had left the Embassy for an hour, only to return with an annoyed expression. I decided to look into this. At the nearby grocery where many of the Soviet Embassy personnel purchased their food, we had a *rubbish collector*, no less than the son of the shopkeeper. He had, at the urging of his father, been studying Russian for several years. When Hyman Bosqueverde informed me that the father could no longer afford the lessons, I had arranged to pay for the boy's instruction out of petty cash. The opportunity to have somebody in place to chat with the Soviets was too good to pass up. I even gave the boy a cryptonym since Hunt was all for carrying a full complement of saddlebags. It could only make us look more impressive back at Headquarters. The grocery store clerk became AV/GROUNDHOG. It became one more of the Station jokes. GROUNDHOG was sixteen years old.

On the heels of Varkhov's new activities, however, I met

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GROUNDHOG at a café to give him specific instructions. While his Russian probably had a long way to go, I told him to do his best to get Varkhov's chauffeur (who was always purchasing Pepsi-Cola at the grocery store) into some kind of conversation about his boss's traveling habits of late. The chauffeur brought the subject up himself. Did the boy know of any deluxe apartments for rent in the area? Varkhov's mysterious trips out of the Embassy were explained. He had been going to see real estate agents.

Hunt loved this piece of news. He checked out his lists, and handed me a sheet of paper with twenty names. "These are wealthy individuals, sympathetic to us, who might have just the kind of place Varkhov is looking for. We can probably work with one of the realtors Varkhov has gone to already, get him together with a landlord on this list."

On discussion, we decided to pass it over to Gordy Morewood. He knew every realtor in Montevideo.

Gordy, as usual, gave good results. We selected a charming ground-floor apartment in a small villa on Calle Feliciano Rodríguez, owned by an old gentleman named Don Bosco Teótimo Blandenques. Varkhov was introduced to him by Gordy's real estate man, and Varkhov, a fierce negotiator, ended up paying considerably less rent than his share of the villa was worth. Don Bosco knew, of course, that we would make up the difference, and add a dividend.

We also had to obtain Señor Blandenques' permission to install a few sneakies. No ordinary installation would do; Hunt wanted "a high-efficiency audio op."

Don Bosco did not mind the risk, he informed us. He had no fear of Varkhov should the Soviet discover his cooperation with us. "I would invite him to a duel," said Don Bosco. "I have not engaged in such a confrontation for twenty-eight years, but that is only because I have faced each minute of each day of all the days in these last twenty-eight years with the knowledge that I have taken an oath to demand satisfaction from any person who presumes to speak improperly to me. This vow, señores, provides me with equanimity." Teótimo Blandenques' sentiments were certainly fortified by the curve of his sweeping white mustache. "My difficulty," added Don Bosco soon after, "is,

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however, with the technical equipment. You would have to drill many holes. I do not believe in sullyng venerable walls."

Don Bosco's villa had been subdivided into two apartments twenty years ago, and that must have sullied a few venerable walls, but Don Bosco's eyes suggested that it was not advisable to throw such facts into the pot. Instead, we waited, and over cocktails, noble Don Bosco gave way to Blandenques, the *rentier*. Howard obtained permission to put in the equipment. We would have to pay an overcharge of 30 percent, and make reparations afterward to all walls, woodwork, stone foundations or molding disturbed by the audio installation.

"The old thief," said Howard, "will probably ask Gordy Morewood to represent him on the reparations committee."

I was frightfully depressed that night. While there was nothing to keep me from writing to Kittredge whenever I wanted, then hoarding my pages until June 1, I realized that a letter which could not be sent off so soon as it was completed did not seem to serve quite as much purpose. Besides, I was missing Kittredge physically. On successive nights, I awakened from the midst of a dream in which I was making love to her. That had not happened before, and I was shocked at the carnality we expressed. It was more than worthy of a brothel. I began to wonder if I was being fueled by some rich mixture of anxiety in relation to Libertad, Peones, and Chevi. All was quiet there, and I could hope that nothing would stir from that quarter, but it did amount to one more large uncertainty to carry through days of work and nights of uneasy sleep.

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June 1, 1958

Dear Kittredge,

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

Of course, a few things did pass our way this month. Vice President Nixon stopped in Montevideo on his South American junket, and Hunt took him on a tour through our Embassy quarters, savaging Station cover pretty completely, I expect, by offering outrageous thumbnail sketches of each of us to Mr. Nixon and Mrs. Nixon as, viz, "This is Sherman Porringer who can tell you anything you might want to know, Mr. Vice President, about Uruguayan labor unions and how we aid them in getting rid of their leftists."

Porringer, bless him, was so embarrassed that he heehawed like an Oklahoma mule.

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

"I wouldn't say no to that," said Porringer. Thrice weekly we had to listen to his harangue on local labor leaders: "Stupid sons of bitches, Uruguayan meatballs." Now Hunt tells him right in front of Vice President Nixon, "Well, if you wouldn't say no to that, would you say yes?"

"There's some real democratic spirit around," Porringer manages to mutter.

Hunt now chooses to deliver his piece in front of all of us rather than take Mr. and Mrs. Nixon back to his office. I don't know if it's nervousness, bravura, or the calculation that he might as well impress us too, but, in any event, as Chief of Station, he's entitled to his two-minute aria before returning our guests to the Ambassador. "Mr. Vice President," says Hunt, "I am going to presume on this occasion to restore for you a wholly minor incident in your busy life, but I do recollect an evening when my wife, Dorothy, and I, repairing to Harvey's Restaurant for a bit of after-theater supper, had the great good luck to be seated near to you and Mrs. Nixon. May I say that on impulse, I walked over to your table and introduced myself. You were kind enough to invite Dorothy and me to join you."

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

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

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

"Ho, ho," said Hunt.

"The Hiss case came up," said Pat Nixon.

"I remember," said the Vice President, "that you, Howard, congratulated me on what you called 'my indefatigable pursuit' of Alger Hiss, and I had to thank you. In those days, there was still, concerning that matter, a lot of *división de opiniones*, if I'm employing acceptable Spanish."

"You certainly are," said Hunt. He looked in danger of bouncing on his toes, he was thus excited. "I remember," he said, "it turned out to be a particularly pleasant half-hour discussion of the foreign and domestic scene. Your memory is superb, sir."

"A most pleasurable meeting," concluded Nixon, and shifted his weight, a signal doubtless to Hunt, who now steered him down the hall to the Ambassador's office. I wish you could have seen the Vice President, Kittredge. Nixon's an ordinary man in appearance, yet he's not. He must be as completely the instrument of his own will as Hugh Montague. Can you conceive of two people, however, who are more unlike?

Hunt now comes back to say to us, "Gang, you have just met the next President of the United States."

I wonder if Howard is considering a resignation from the Agency in order to work for Nixon in 1960. He's growing dissatisfied these days, and the cause is our new Ambassador, a nicely tailored specimen named Robert Woodward whom Hunt was

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complaining about before Woodward even reached the Embassy. "Another eminent nonentity," was Howard's initial description. "The man's ambassadorial credentials consist of a stint in Costa Rica."

Woodward, however, proved no nugatory presence. He ties into a State Department bloc who are flat-out opposed to the Agency, and one of his first questions to Hunt was, "What mischief are you fomenting down here?"

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

Woodward then gave a lecture which Howard will be dining out on for years. " 'Mr. Hunt, please recognize,' " goes Howard's imitation, " 'that this country of Uruguay, while small in size, is the finest democracy extant in South America. There are few nations which can lay claim to being as well run, as clean of corruption, and so much of a model to less fortunate small nations. Uruguay is the Switzerland of South America.' " Howard repeats all this for Gatsby and Kearns, Porringer, Waterston, and myself, then repeats, "*clean of corruption!* Why, these welfare-state crooks in the Legislative Assembly can purchase a new foreign car every year *free of duty*. What is that worth when they sell it? Ten thousand extra frogskins?"

He's right, of course. Uruguay is corrupt. The liberals steal and so does the right. Don Jaime Saavedra Carbajal, for example, is not above herding thousands of his cattle over the Jaguar River into Brazil as a means of saving untold customs duty. In a word, smuggling. The border police certainly have to be bought off. Howard doesn't disapprove, however. It reminds him, he says, of how the first great Texas fortunes were built. I don't see how this alters the judgment, but then, it's not the day to argue with Howard. The real problem is that Station no longer has its way with State. While we never mingled all that much with their personnel, we could always cater to our vanity by trotting over to any of the offices in the Embassy; the boys there, whether thirty years old or sixty, were properly resentful of the warm welcome we receive from the State Department ladies.

Now we've become the greaser gang. State Department personnel are beginning to act hollow and over-friendly, as if

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they are our social superiors but don't want us to know it because greasers do wreck property. Two weeks ago Hunt was notified that Woodward and his new deputy will attend all the foreign embassy functions; Hunt can, in effect, take a well-deserved rest in the evening and enjoy his family. Needless to say, this removes us from the foreign embassy circuit, a blessing—I'll be able to read a book—but social ostracism does have its bite even if you don't mind what you are being cut out of. Hunt is, of course, inwardly livid.

Final note. There is, actually, more going on than I admit to. Over the last month we've managed to set up a love nest for Zenia Masarov and Georgi Varkhov, an operation that—how could it be otherwise?—involved numerous steps. Apart from managing to bait the trap, technicians had to fly down from Washington to install the audio and test the bugs, the best of which is emplaced in no less of a salient than one of the posts of a four-poster bed.

I have to admit that we at the Station may be showing a certain prurient anticipation. In ten days, we'll see if it works. I could let you know earlier, but will accept your strictures for what they are. July 1 will have to prove soon enough.

Yours,
Harry

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July 1, 1958

Dear Kittredge,

Zenia and Georgi turned out to be having a passionate affair. I'm amazed at how much I am feeling for Brishka, and,

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believe me, she now speaks of him often. One is almost inclined to say, "Poor Varkhov!" for he has to hear constantly about the husband whose wife he is presumably despoiling—Zenya is voluble concerning her sense of shame. Naturally, Porringer will make a point of saying, "No woman ever got injured by a good fuck," a bracing piece of information, and wouldn't it be nice if it were true?

Meanwhile, I have been given the monitor's role in AV/RATHOLE, which is the unbemused name Hunt has bestowed on our eavesdropping operation. I don't know if I'm dealing with a comedy or a monstrosity. Can humans be held accountable for what they say in the midst of the act?

The mechanics often prove droll. While the audio promises to be the best yet devised for this kind of tap, and we are able to receive conversations from the living room, the kitchen, the dining room, and the bedroom, there are gaps when Zenia or Georgi rattles a plate, or, worse, the bedsprings take over. The Finnish Micks go over after every visit to pick up the tapes from a bedroom we've rented on the floor above, and come back to their desk in our office to spend hours translating. Then, I try to put it into better English without losing any hard intelligence. Since the Sourballs also receive the raw Russian transcripts a day later in Washington and can decide for themselves what is truly of value, I begin to wonder if I am needed. I take this thought to Hunt who assures me that my little unhappiness is but a cavil. "Just keep up your output," he tells me. I have a hunch he is sending copies of my stuff to a couple of his *primes* in Western Division.

The worst of it is that the boil-down is minimal. Varkhov goes to his love-nest to forget about his office, and Zenia meets him because she is "captive of exotic alien obsession." We hear a great deal about that. Varkhov comes through in the tapes as even cruder human stuff than anticipated—apparently, he is descended from a long line of serfs, and his father rose to be a railroad engineer, that is, a locomotive driver, while he, Georgi, distinguished himself as a young if all but uneducated platoon Commissar, survived Stalingrad, and was some sort of hit man or executioner for the GRU during the Red Army's advance to Berlin. He's a butcher boy according to Zenia's wrought de-

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

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

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

I’m sorry, Kittredge, but after the Finnish Micks do their literal translation, I am hard put to get it back into enough English to give an idea of what Zenia and Georgi sound like. That last in raw translation came to me as “turpitude in crotch hairs, stinking crotch hairs.” Don’t look to Russians for the delicate touch.

She upbraids Varkhov for quite a time as “*nyet kulturny*.” I am generally familiar with the expression via Masarov, but Gohogon, another of the Finnish Micks, assures me that this is a forceful insult among Russians—either you are a cultured person, or you are without culture. Zenia Arkadyova feels degraded exactly because she is full of passion for this *nyet kulturny*, Varkhov. “I had five aunts, all ladies, all dead. Would faint with one look at you.”

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

I become sufficiently curious to get Gohogon to let me listen to the raw tape. Another element reveals itself. Zenia’s words may be brutal, but her voice is soft, melodious, welcoming. His responding grunt is one of pure happiness, something like a hippo snorting in muck. *Khorosho*, he replies, which comes out much like a grunt itself when uttered in a hoarse voice. “Horror-show,” is the nearest aural equivalent. In fact, *khorosho* means okay, pure and simple okay.

“I disgrace my family,” says Zenia.

“*Khorosho*.”



"You are a dog."

"*Khorosho*."

"You are a pig."

"*Khorosho*."

"Specimen of greed."

"*Khorosho, khorosho*."

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

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

"Are unworthy."

"Okay."

"Unworthy of my husband."

"Understood."

"You revolt me."

"I don't," said Varkhov.

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

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

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

So I commence editing. A fearsome product results. Another example, be it said, of the validity of K. Gardiner Montague's thesis on A and O. If I allowed myself, I'd be in a whirl of disturbed feelings about what I'm doing, but Alpha has taken

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over, Alpha appears to thrive on the excitement of bringing off a good job with obdurate, even repellent material. Not that this is entirely repellent. Kittredge, in honesty, I am not unmoved by the depth of Zenia's voice. Can you imagine me ever admitting this to anyone but you? Yet our good Reverend Hubbard has to confess that even Varkhov's grunts, listened to long enough, do strike human chords: tenderness in the midst of animal greed, sorrow in the heart of all his harsh curses. He comes—all right, I will tell all—shouting, "Whore, mother-of-pigs, filth I fuck," incredible, awful stuff which evokes an aria of responsive ecstasies from her. If I allowed myself, I could feel diminished by the power of their carnality. But I have my Alpha, good, determined work-soldier, and he runs the operation. It even becomes tedious piecing through the transcripts for "good passages." With the aid of Gohogon, I find the equivalent bits on the tape and splice them. Then I listen as if it were music. Of course, the cuts don't always work. Whereupon I have to play the raw tapes and try to find other moments of Russian sound that could bridge the transition. Since I don't know the language, my choices often make no great sense word for word, but miss by miss and bit by bit, I do patch together a workable, even overwhelming actualization on edited tape of what Hunt was looking for. If he's been complaining every day at how long it takes, he is generous enough, old clam-lipped Howard, to express his praise finally at my good job. And I am pleased. Deep inside of Omega, hopelessly incarcerated, a subparticle of my soul is mourning for Brishka, but Alpha has carried the day. Indeed, the week. I feel like a sound editor and/or radio director. I have created an interesting vocal work. I swear, before the power of a tough job well done, moral qualms have no more force than blades of grass before a lawnmower. Or, so it seems while working.

Now, of course, the question arises of what to do with the finished product. Hunt, predictably, is all for blasting Boris Masarov out of his socks. Send him the tape, and then no matter what happens we can count on a sizable profit. At the least, if he decides to swallow it, he and Varkhov will have to work together. More likely, Masarov will attempt to have Varkhov sent back to Moscow, or will apply for return himself. That will be time-consuming for the Soviet team.

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

Hunt argues sensibly that Boris is likely to look upon us as even more of an enemy than before. Hjalmar Omaley, who has flown in from Soviet Russia Division again, is, of course, all on the side of working for a defection. The Sourballs are geared for that. Arguments go on between Omaley and Hunt that must reflect the scene at Headquarters between Western Hemisphere Division *cum* Groogs on one side, Soviet Russia Division on the other. I won't consume pages of this letter by listing any more of the debates, scenarios, lacunae, and, via Omaley, paranoid accusations. Hjalmar is seeing Nancy Waterston every night, and Hunt no longer knows whether to trust her. *Un tour de drôle*.

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

TO: AV/HACENDADO

FROM: KU/GHOUL-1

CONGRATULATIONS ON RATHOLE. SPLENDID DEMOPO. FELICITATIONS.

Demopo, Kittredge, stands for *Demolition Options*, that is, wreaking havoc on your opposition.

Hunt was in heaven. "This is the first recognition from your guy since he invited me to dinner two years ago," he hawked his throat. "On second thought, Harry, you know how to read the man. What is Harlot up to? Does he want to come in on this?"

"He would never approach you directly if he wanted to take it over," I venture. It's amazing, Kittredge, how one becomes an expert. I, who have never understood Hugh for one moment, am now explaining him to others.

"Well, what is he saying?" asked Hunt.

"He's offering genuine felicitations, I believe. After all, it is a nice operation."

"Hell and soda water if it isn't," Hunt exclaims. He can't quite trust me when it comes to Hugh Montague, but on the other hand, I am saying what he wants to hear. So he *tends* to believe me. Then shakes his head. "There's got to be more to this cable."

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

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

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

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

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

"All right," said Hugh, "enough of that. The cable was merely preamble to get you on the secure phone. I'm not keening in on RATHOLE. Its promise is small. Masarov and Varkhov are made of the hard stuff. They will never defect. In any event, it's not my playground. I'm calling with a query for you. How would you like to be transferred to Israel?"

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

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

"I guess I had better think about this."

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

"Yessir."

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

"Broken?"

"Crushed." He paused. When I did not reply, he went on. "No question. It's Angleton's fief. You will be the enemy as far as *Jesus* is concerned." He pronounced *Jesus* as *Hey-sooz*, James *Jesus* Angleton.

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

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

"Can I think about it?"

"Do. You're at a fork. Brood."

"How do we pick this up again?"

"Call Rosen. He's now my slave Friday. Telephone him at TSS-Tertiary on one of your open lines. Chat away. Harmless buddy-buddy stuff. If you've decided that Israel is go, you need merely remark, 'How I miss Maine now that I'm in Montevideo.' I'll take care of the rest."

"And if one decides in the negative?"

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

"Yessir."

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

I will not try to describe the next forty-eight hours. I felt exalted; I dwelt in terror. Angleton's reputation is easily as fearsome as your husband's, but then it is to Hugh's and Angleton's honor that Agency people speak of them as legends without every quite knowing what they do.

I was able to learn two things about myself in the next two days. Dear Married Lady: I entered the abyss of my cowardice and smelled the noxious fumes therein; I climbed the highest peaks of my hitherto unglimped high ambition. I even thought of the moment I got back into the polo game. I ended by telephoning Arnie Rosen at TSS on an open Station phone, resolved to speak of my longing for Maine.

So soon as I approached that, however, he cut me off. "Forget all about a vacation," he said. "Your request for leave is canceled."

"What?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Oh, oh, oh," he said.

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

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

"My mother? Jessica?"

"Yes."

"She can't."

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"Well, she's the reason, although she's not the executor of the decision."

"Who is the executor?"

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

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

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

"Why not?"

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

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

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

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

"How far away?"

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

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

On the other hand, even though I have been up to my neck with RATHOLE, I now have difficulty believing that I am wholly

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in Uruguay. I must confess to you that I have a private teleology. I still believe I was born for a purpose and will strive to reach a certain end, even if I can neither see the end nor name it. Forty-eight hours in the scenario-factory of my mind had been spent coming to the conclusion that I must accept a dubious, and conceivably career-smashing job because I was fated to go to Israel. Then, abruptly, I discovered I wasn't destined at all. Knocked out on a technicality. It has left me awfully detached about RATHOLE. And don't you know, Kittredge, that may be just as well. RATHOLE seems in danger of decomposing even as we deal with it.

The Sourballs; you see, won the battle. Their decision prevailed: We have to try to get a defector out of this, and the consensus settled on Varkhov. Masarov, the old hand, it was agreed, would simply prove too difficult, too outraged. So Station discussed approaches to Georgi. Porringer is for tailing Varkhov's chauffeured car with one of the cabs from AV/EMARIA. Sooner or later, Varkhov will stop at a café for lunch, and then Omaley and Gohogon, bulked up by Porringer or myself, can be summoned by radio via AV/EMARIA to move in on Varkhov, hand him the tape and a phone number, and tell him to play it *for himself alone*. We-can-all-be-friends will serve as the theme of this pageant. Hjalmar, however, hates such an outright approach, and SR Division is behind him. Meetings, they argue, must be kept to a minimum. We could, of course, just mail it to Varkhov directly at the Russian Embassy, but how would we know he received it?

I suggest we use one of our villa keys to leave the tape in Varkhov's love nest. If the locks have been changed by him, we can hire a locksmith. Disadvantage: The locksmith could attract the notice of the neighbors. If that happens, the operation is blown.

Of course, once we leave a tape, the love nest goes into terminal, anyway. I propose that we send AV/ALANCHE-1, (leader of the sign-painters and a most trustworthy kid) over with our keys. We can do this at a time when we know, via GOGOL, that Varkhov's car is parked on the street back at the Russian Embassy. AV/ALANCHE-1 need merely try the lock. Whether the keys work or not, he must depart immediately. At

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least we will know then whether we can open the door.

First rate. My idea is implemented on a Friday afternoon, and we learn that the lock has not been changed. After the weekend, then, we will make our move. We've discovered by now that no matter how many times a week our villa on Calle Feliciano Rodríguez is used by Varkhov, he always has a tryst on his Monday break for lunch (because, as we learn from the tape, he has spent the weekend with his wife and is heartily sick of her!). We decide, therefore, to leave the spool with a tape recorder sitting next to it right on the table in his entrance foyer. An accompanying note will suggest a place and time of meeting. All he has to do for assent is to substitute a blank piece of paper, also provided, in place of the note. All stated in immaculate Russian, thanks to Hjalmar. There is a concept behind this. The *House of Love on Feliciano Rodríguez Street* (as we now, with a curious mixture of superiority and embarrassment term the theater of operations for this sticky caper) is always approached and entered by Georgi a half-hour before Zenia. To prevent his chauffeur from getting a glimpse of her, the limousine is always dispatched right back to the Embassy. Then Zenia arrives by cab and stops a block away. Walks to the door. Georgi, given his advance half hour, is out of his clothes and hungry as a Russian bear. But she delays him. Sometimes, she makes him put his clothes on again. "We must start as equals," she tells him. Fascinating, but the point is that we do have a predictable half hour at the commencement when he is alone.

Come Monday morning, therefore, our Company gift is deposited on the foyer table, and Gatsby, who is the least likely to be familiar on sight to either of our Russians, is waiting in a surveillance cab half a block away. Fifteen minutes later, Georgi, right on time, enters the House of Love. Ten minutes later he comes out. He is perspiring visibly. He starts to pace the street. These perambulations become progressively longer to and fro until they take him right past Gatsby, who is still sitting in the parked taxi. Oh, my God, Georgi recognizes Jay. He stops on the sidewalk, salutes him, sticks his thumb to his nose, waggles his fingers, raises a mallet-like fist, smashes it down on the hood of the taxi hard enough to bestow a sizable dent in the metal, and then, seeing Zenia, strides off to meet her, whereupon they enter

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the house again. Gatsby, in a perfect perspiration of his own, waits in the taxi and has to haggle with his driver over what it will cost to repair the damaged hood. A half hour later, Zenia, distraught, leaves with Georgi, and they hail a cab. When Gatsby attempts to follow at the book-approved distance, Georgi, at a red light, has his own vehicle back itself up a full hundred yards, all the way to Gatsby's car, gets out, leaves a second dent on the other side of the hood, and jumps back into his cab. Realizing, I think, that discretion is somewhat pointless by now, Varkhov even drops Zenia on the Rambla one building away from her high-rise, and returns to the Embassy where he pays off the driver and shakes his fist at Jay Gatsby even as the latter drives off.

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

Naturally, all hope for a defection is now lost. Hunt, backed by Western Hemisphere Division and the Groogs, is arguing that a defection was never in the cards, and the alternative is to use our demopos. "Speed is of the essential," he cables to Washington and in return is given the go-ahead. There is very little to lose. Duplicate tapes are mailed to Masarov at the Embassy, and delivered to the doorman in his high-rise apartment. At a party given by the Swedish Embassy, a third duplicate is left in Masarov's overcoat pocket. Given Ambassador Woodward's injunction that State Department presence at embassy functions