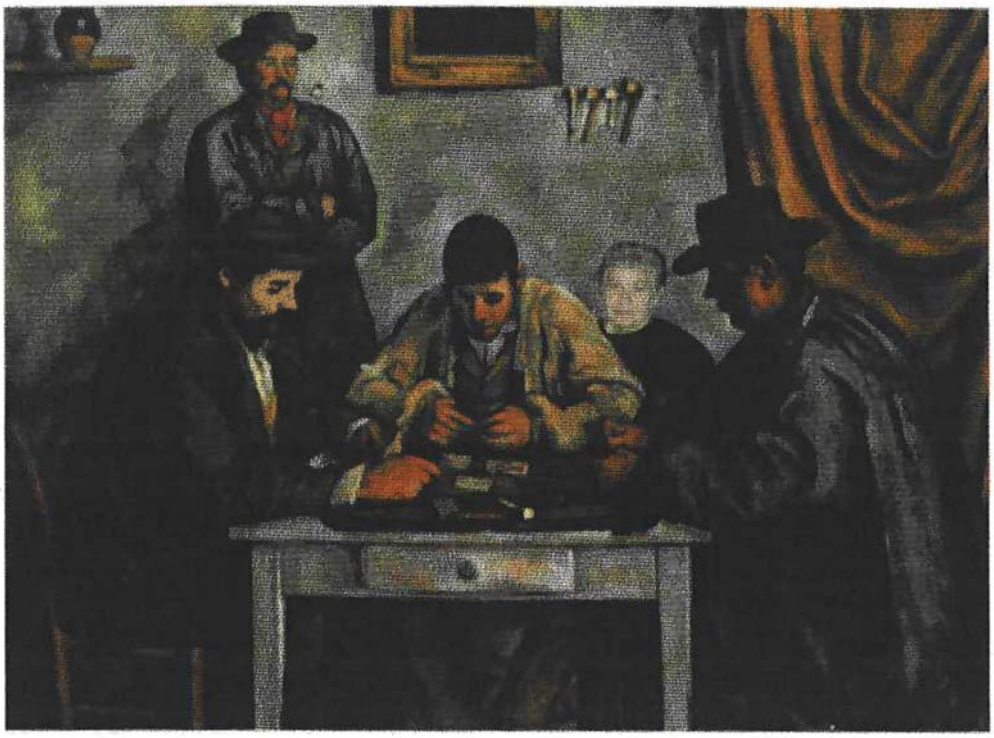
PATIENCE



AND SHUFFLE THE CARDS

Evelyn Miller Stahl

PATIENCE, AND SHUFFLE THE CARDS

Evelyn Miller Stahl

Patience, and shuffle: An old Spanish proverb.

"Should it not be so, I say, oh cousin,
Patience, and shuffle the cards."
—Don Quixote de la Mancha
Miguel Cervantes

"Men disappoint me so, I disappoint myself so,
yet courage, patience, shuffle the cards."
—Margaret Fuller
in a letter

N.B.
Most names, including the author's, have been altered, although events are presented as they occurred. The time is 1970.
Evelyn Miller Stahl
AKA Harriet Macey Browne

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Preface

2101 Walnut Street, Apt. 806
Philadelphia, PA 19103
May 1997

What is this suddenly doing on your doorstep?

In 1970, about to turn fifty, I took a longish trip abroad and upon return wrote *Patience, and Shuffle the Cards*, which, aside from an occasional nostalgic leafing through its pages, had been languishing in the file cabinet since.

This year Ben and I opted to stay home for the winter and I needed something to keep me occupied. Hauling out the old manuscript I put it on the computer, shortening and editing a little as I went and in the process learning a bit about the New Technology, until now resisted.

At this point I needed to do something with the result: it couldn't just go back in the old file cabinet! So am sharing Patience with a very few close friends and relatives who I think will find something in it of interest—if not the whole thing—and you are one of the lucky ones.

The material is of course dated, twenty-seven years old. Franco was in power in Spain, and I couldn't bring myself to shorten those pages by much. And try to get by on seven dollars a day in Europe today, economize as you may!

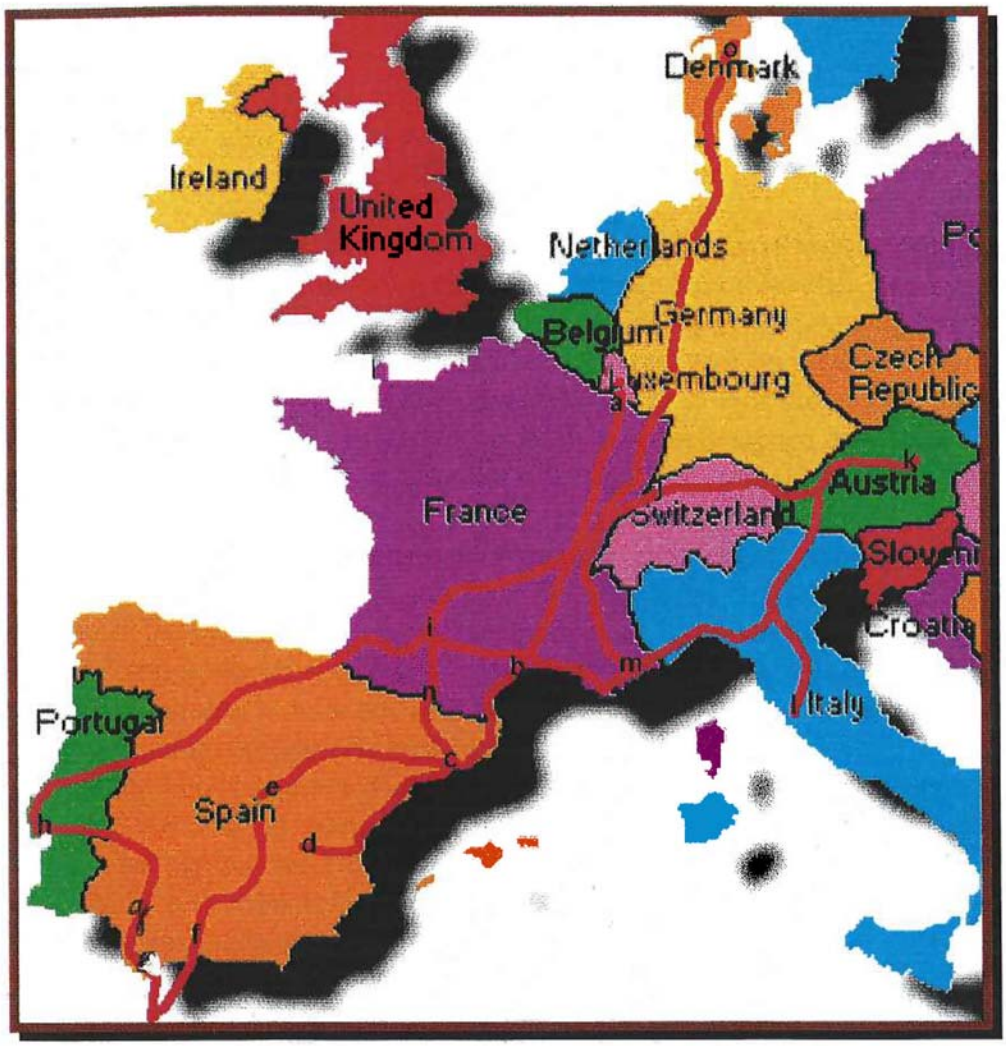
What emerges, I guess, is a mixed bag detailing many aspects of a varied experience.

I am asked why the names are disguised. It is obvious I would want to protect the Spaniards. For others, I did not wish to deprive them of their privacy, and in a way the same is true for me—it was much eaiser writing it all as Macey than as Miller.

Ben (Mike), my technical advisor, and I hope you will enjoy reading it as we enjoyed the winter's work of getting it done.

As ever,
Evelyn Miller Stahl

Macey's Itinerary



(a) Luxembourg
(train route to Sete: Metz, Lyon, Avignon)
(b) Sete (via Perpignon to:)
(c) Barcelona (along coast to:)
Tarragona
Valencia (then side-trip NW, to :)
(d) Cuenca, then back to Valencia
(c) Barcelona
(e) Madrid
(f) Malaga (through Straits of Gibraltar to:)
Tangier, Morocco
Cadiz
(g) Seville
Merida
Badajoz
(h) Lisbon, Portugal
Nazare
Coimbra
Bayonne, France

(i) Toulouse
(j) Basel (via Zurich and Innsbruck to:)
(k) Vienna (then back to:)
Innsbruck (thru Brenner Pass to:)
Venice
(l) Rome (up to Perugia)
Perugia (Florence, Pisa, Genoa, Riviera to:)
(m) Marseilles (past Perpignon to:
Gerona (then slightly East to coast and:)
Calella de Palafrugell (along coast to:)
Barcelona (NW to:)
(n) Andorra
Toulouse
(m) Marseilles
Arles
Nimes (thru France and Germany N to:)
Lubeck
(o) Copenhagen

Chapter One: IN THIS PICKLE

What put you in this pickle?
—Don Quixote

The burgeoning cold that had gripped me by the throat was settling in an ear. I had just got the curse and was probably a little feverish to boot, yet, burrowing deeper into the featherbed I was blissfully content. Outside the big bay of the warm and well-scrubbed room on the third floor of the Hotel Wellington it was night again. The street lamp at the corner showed the snow still falling on the Place des Martyr just below, a stately square that some spring day, I did not doubt, would wear the handsome formal gardens of the tourist brochure. Now it lay blanketed in three inches of snow.

Another Luxembourg day had come to an end. Almost twice around the clock I had lain abed: slept, read and between times daydreamed out the window at the falling flakes, now dusted powdery fine upon the land, now flights of soft white stars. A few times I must have risen for the unavoidable, meanwhile pausing to look out onto my new environment. I was completely anonymous in this room—and how I reveled in it!

What had brought me here? Shall I say Icelandic Airlines, cheaper than the rest? Or at another level, the constantly recurring yen for other lands and different people, the need to alter my horizon, the just plain itchy foot. Yet there was a more important third level which constituted the immediate stimulus, a combination of factors not quite so simply put.

# # #

It was winter's end and I, along with the times, was out of joint. Twice in as many years I had left my job after a brief unhappy stint and now I hardly knew what next to undertake. Other things too: physical nudgings that left one all too often harkening inward sympathetically, shenanigans of a female thermostat out of kilter; and the empty nest when both sons' college absence had lengthened into marriage. Suddenly the middle aged woman. As to broader considerations, the prevailing social and political scene inspired me mainly with disgust and the will had left me for involvement in it. Overridingly, I guess, in May I'd be coming face to face with fifty. Now the insecurities of youth, held at bay by the reassurance of the crowded years, came threatening. But nothing more of youth, not the boundless horizon. For until we sight fifty just around the bend all things are possible. Even immortality: death has been for others, secretly we knew. But fifty makes philosophers of us all, at fifty comes the contemplative pause—companion to the menopause.

You see, I needed to get out, then to return. To encounter fifty in fresh surroundings and on my own terms. March up to fifty young again in heart, stalk the adventure, recapture the rapture....Shout Lookee here you old bogey, I challenge you to the next half century!

And so I would head abroad—out—three months later to be joined there by my husband for another month, together to return. My husband who had known me well for all these many years. Who understood this as precisely what I must now do. Who encouraged the plan, bolstering it when momentarily I blanched at the gross self-interest involved.

I had been to Europe twice before. Three years earlier Mike and I had spent a glorious summer driving about the continent in a little red Simka we rented in Paris. The following year, with a grandson on his way in Heidelberg I had felt called upon to assist in his delivery.

I will be harking back to that initial time to tell this story, for it was the culmination of a lifelong thirst to get to Europe. Therefore do not rush me, friend... as long as we have the time it's patience that is of the essence.

# # #

No doubt the greatest factor from my youth spurring me across the ocean that first time was the impact Spain had had on me. Spain, particularly , in l936 to '39 with its beautiful people going down through disaster to defeat. I ached in those years to join the fray, to slough off frivolous studies for the barricades in Madrid, to don there at the least a nurse's white. I don't suppose I had a serious plan nor anything that could have proved an asset—neither skill nor even language. And so, persuaded by my parents to remain in high school, I had finally settled for things like helping in a terribly modest way to raise funds for Loyalist Spain, hawking among friends the brightly patterned scarves of purple, red and yellow that proclaimed in Spanish the revolutionary slogans, the anti-fascist heroes of that time and place. They were eighteen inch squares of synthetic silk which, with their proud and confident exhortations, it broke your heart to look at when the end came. Before that end, to see within the ranks the will to freedom trampled by political commissars, concomitant of the Russian planes and arms the people must rely on while our government along with others reacted with a deaf ear and a blind eye and a devastating embargo.

I had written a poem too, about Spain. It must have been l940, and I twenty, when the Chicago papers noted briefly the appearance of anti-Franco leaflets in the streets of Madrid. I have reason to remember vividly the act of composing the verses in my mind: must really have got carried away and the needle of the power machine I was operating at Kuppenheimer's broke off inside my finger. It was terribly painful of course. They were never able to dislodge it completely and even now when I stretch the skin at the tip of the first finger on my left hand, a small white smudge in the pink surface marks the embedded steel. My honorable battle scar of that war, inflicted though it was on the shores of the Illinois River and not the Ebro.

Well, I very much wanted to get to Spain—had to in my time. Call me romantic if you like—I wouldn't be telling you anything of this if I feared labels. Though I regretted having to visit it under Franco and fascism, both had persisted for thirty years and might outlive me, who could tell? Too, it was more my Spain perhaps than Franco's.

So three years ago we went to Spain and I was keyed up with emotion from the time the Pyrenees thrust into view. Crossing over from Hendaye, France into Irun, we stopped but briefly at San Sebastian and then, impatient, headed west along the Bay of Biscay. Cautiously we drove along that mountainous coastal road, severe and beautiful, dipping down to pass through ageless fishing villages, their central plazas live with townsfolk on this the day of Saints Pedro and Pablo.

We were bound for Picasso's Guernica and in my handbag I had secreted that colorful silk scarf (I had it still) of purple, red and yellow, providing some little suspense through perfunctory customs inspection. Then at El Arbol I whipped it out and Mike snapped my picture flaunting it. Talk about romantic!

That night we ate Basque fish soup and stuffed peppers and drank the wine of the inn that stood on the plaza facing El Arbol where we had paid homage. Our room upstairs had a small wrought iron balcony and rented for a dollar and a half. I looked down from that balcony to watch three merry little girls tapping out Basque dances in the square below, then, drooping happily being carted home by tender parents at the hour of eleven. And, made maudlin by the strong red wine, I thought of all the little ones who never got conceived and born in Guernica to frolic in that plaza, thought of their prospective parents who died of bombing thirty years before in that event that called forth Picasso's agonized portrayal and made the world recoil in horror. I looked down on the proud and beautiful old men in their berets who still sat on the benches and debated heatedly who knows what...and I knew it might be the lack of rainfall they discussed, but that the terror of that day could never be far distant from their thoughts.

Guernica is hardly a tourist center, though once, in the heyday of Santiago de Compostelo, it was a resting place for pilgrims. More important yet, for hundreds of years it has been the spiritual capital of the Basques, one of Europe's oldest peoples. The symbol of their independent nature and of a recurrent separatist sentiment is an old tree. Today's Arbol de Guernica is a descendent of the original oak under which Basque representatives gathered from afar to administer the traditional code of rights, the ancient fueros that through six centuries safeguarded the individual's liberties. Here each new monarch was required to come and stand and swear that he would recognize these rights. The tree's image is carved into everything Basque—we saw it on tombstones. And

as El Arbol symbolizes the free Basque spirit, so are the Basque people symbolic of the Spaniard's preoccupation with his freedom.

It was Monday and market day in Guernica, that April in the first year of Franco's armed insurrection against the Spanish people's government. The Republicans held a narrow strip of land along the sea two hundred miles long with nearby Bilbao as its stronghold. Many of Guernica's seven thousand residents filled the market place, an easy mark for the Nazi Junker and Heinkel planes which suddenly appeared. Fleeing the high-explosive bombs, the townspeople were machine-gunned from the air. Further fired with incendiary bombs, the town burned for days, a holocaust, before its ashes yielded up over l600 blackened corpses; almost another thousand were wounded in the three hour raid. Goering had exercised his Luftwaffe; Hitler's Spanish rehearsal of the blitz was a success, a proven tactic to deliver terror to civilian populations. The old tree stood, but Franco had struck an irreversible blow against the Spaniard's freedom.

We found Guernica grimly new and clean and still rebuilding, lacking the colorful old quarter of other Spanish towns.

Moving along the following day, we passed through industrial Bilbao, where recent months had seen massive steel strikes and demonstrations in which women and children had joined the workers battling police. All was quiet as we drove through the Pittsburgh-looking city.

Later we explored the drawings left two hundred centuries ago in the caves of Altamira—Sistine Chapel, as they say, of prehistoric art—lodging meanwhile in such an atmospheric palace a few kilometers away in Santillana. Santillana del Mar, immersed still in the Middle Ages, where cattle share living arrangements with their masters, given preferential treatment in the forward quarters and roaming the streets apparently at will.

When we turned the Simka south through Old Castile it was to encounter the more typical Spain of parched adobe villages. Gone were scarlet geraniums cascading from storybook balconies. The lush green prosperous Basque countryside had been replaced by a dusty grinding poverty.

That summer we spent a month driving through Spain. It is tempting to talk on about that time, lingering, as I always long to linger with things Spanish.

Chapter Two: WITH THE LUXEMBOURGEOISIE

Because of my propensity for Spain and Spaniards, I know at once, poring over maps at home as I lay flimsy plans for the current trip, that I shall again spend a substantial portion of my time in Spain. I know, moreover, that it is to Barcelona I shall head almost at once. I have loved the city from those Civil War days, in absentia, then loved her again with a passion when we met. This time I can linger over the consummation, prolong the afterglow.

I write a young American couple we met in Barcelona to say I am arriving and do they know a Spaniard who would tutor me briefly in the language.

I write good friends in Switzerland, he American, she Swiss, to say I shall be turning up there shortly.

To improvise as I traveled, free to make decisions as the spirit moved, was part of the self-prescribed therapy and I resisted working out a detailed advance itinerary. Above all, this trip must be kept *unstructured*. In general I was aware what areas beckoned. And to warm my aging bones in the healing Mediterranean sun, that too was therapy. Within a week or two, I supposed, I should have worked my way from Luxembourg south to Barcelona, stopping over only briefly along the route.

I drew from the bank the special funds squirreled away on paydays past for one trip or another, bought a one-way ticket on Icelandic, a return designed to accompany my husband back from Stockholm and a three-month Eurailpass to give me first class passage anywhere I wished in Western Europe. The remainder would just cover a supply of travelers checks that averaged seven dollars a day for the fourteen weeks' living expenses with a modicum left over for contingencies and things I'd have to buy or want to. And that is what got spent, within sixty cents in Danish coins with which I greeted Mike at the Copenhagen airport.

Passport still in force, I went to my doctor for tetanus shot and re-vaccination, then to Public Health to get the yellow booklet stamped.

To go unfettered was essential, carefree as repeatedly I traded train for hotel. Not need to enumerate each time, That's two, three, five items all accounted for. Nor require male help in lowering a back-and-spirit-breaking case from a too-high shelf. All I would carry, therefore, was a lightweight overnight case. Not that I wished to be briskly well-organized—that's not my life style, as the kids say nowadays. On the contrary, I must eliminate the need to be organized at all. The difference is great, you see: the personal anarchist as opposed to efficiency expert. Simplify, simplify! I would carry my Walden along on a lightly crooked finger.

The week before my departure there arrived in the mail a gift which, as I slit the envelope, left me first unbelieving, then apprehensive. My younger son and his wife had thoughtfully provided me with a youth hostel pass. Andy said that traveling on my budget I should find the pass extremely useful, for most places would tolerate an occasional older person. Rosalind apologized for not having time to sew me up a sheet (whatever that meant) and embroider it with my initials; I reassured her on that score. The gift, I knew, was a real tribute from children to parent, and I was grateful at least for the vote of confidence.

Then I was off from Kennedy Airport that night in early March and shortly lulled to sleep by the free wine and spirits accompanying dinner. I woke to Greenland's sunrise. Watched the young sun flash and dazzle over frosted fields of primeval glacier, ridges of glossy pristine white...giant peaks that, from our vantage, gleamed at once pure crystal in the sun and showed deep purple where they dropped their shadows. We were out there as in a tiny toy airship, motionless in time and space, suspended breathless in that weird white science fiction scape. Perhaps two hours of such magic luminosity...fitting prelude to European adventure.

At Keflavik, where we landed for an hour's refueling stop, a drizzly mist caressed my face, feeling of snow, as I crossed the airfield. A sifting of white lay on the cindery lava-like surface underfoot that stretched out flat to

the horizon, eerie no-man's-land. The airport, glossy new and modern, was so quiet as to magnify each sound, ghostly almost, so unlike the brouhaha we had left.

On the way to a table in the cafeteria I passed the young man who comes to memory as the DPA Kid.

We had been milling impatiently about Icelandic's quarters at Kennedy awaiting my boarding time, when my daughter-in-law runs into this rather giant of a sandy-haired bespectacled young man she had known in the Department of Public Assistance. Like her and so many others of that agency's aspiring young social workers, he could no longer countenance the attendant frustrations and had left. He was headed abroad for six months or as long as his money held, to heal the wounds inflicted by the DPA experience.

Now as I pass him where he sits alone I stop, introducing myself as Rosalind's mother-in-law. Happy to have company he joins me at my table . In eager anticipation of our first night in Europe, we compare notes on Luxembourg's hotels. Leafing through our literature, we are both impressed by the Hotel Wellington as having the right price and ambiance. I remark in passing there is a youth hostel in the vicinity, but for the Kid's first night abroad he is not inclined to seek it out. I mention my hostel pass briefly, then hastily concur in his decision.

Somehow the remaining time aloft elapses and eventually, an hour late, we are losing altitude, the meadows and roads of Luxembourg are rising up at us and Behold! they too bear a coating of unwelcome white; then we are landing and it can be seen a light but steady snow is falling. I am unhappy with the fact, you may imagine.

The only passenger whose total luggage fit beneath her seat, I am first to be waved through the customs barrier. I cash some bills into Luxembourg francs and, ignoring the cabbies who offer their services, head for the bus into town which I know I'll find just outside the door. A variety of busses waits there and I remember from two years earlier one must be careful to board the proper one.

# # #

Now we are wheezing toward Luxembourg City and, peering out the window at the foreign-angled roof-lines, I am exulting at being back in Europe when I am jogged out of exultation by polyglot shouts of Halt! Halt! from the rear of the bus. Up front we suppose the precariously linked trailer containing everyone's baggage but mine has parted company and gone rolling off, but it is only that the back door, too many people pressed against it, has flown open. No one has fallen into the road and it requires only that the driver's mate descend and secure it from without. Meanwhile the incident has made for greater informality aboard. When we pull to a stop in the city the German hausfrau across the aisle, a buxom countrywoman surrounded by bundles, asks me where the Bahnhof is and I am able to point it out right there on our left and help a little with her burden. She would have spotted the railroad station herself directly on descending, but this makes me feel very much at home abroad.

The city was still fresh in memory from two years ago, and I crossed the street to the tourist bureau. I was seeking directions to the Wellington when the DPA Kid appeared beside me at the counter. He had added a kind of Texas Ranger hat to his khaki outfit and acquired a buddy considerably shorter and leaner but attired in much the same spirit. The hotel was only three, four blocks away, not warranting a cab. I picked up my bag and the boys joined forces with me, the Kid stooping to rassle his voluminous gear onto his back: giant knapsack, bulging bedroll, frying pans, axe—a formidable assortment. A Herculean task! at which his big round face grew red and apoplectic. And I, with my same old lack of tact I remarked he would be better off to travel light...fine beginning to that new identity I sought!

Together we trudged off through the streets of night, the snow hard-driven now and mounting on the pavement. When we stopped midway to investigate less distant lodgings, I found them unsatisfactory, but the boys were chancing it and I moved on alone. Eventually, lost a little, sneezing a little, wet through and more than a little weary, I ventured to ask directions of a sympathetic looking woman bundled up and shoveling snow, and so with little more than a mile's walk gained my barely half-mile's destination.

The Wellington appeared more Weinstube than hotel, the front all window, a rod across its middle curtaining the bottom half in red. But the light and warmth and human contact would be welcome after the eerie stillness of the snow-shrouded streets whose mystery was only heightened by the occasional lamp that pierced the foreign brooding dark, the sudden laughter trickling through an abruptly opened door from a bar-café across the street.

I turned the knob decisively and entered. All eyes reached for me in that stony European stare as they took my measure. At several booths and tables the Germanic red cloth had been removed and oldish men sat shuffling their cards over a glass of wine or occasional stein of beer. Around the bar lounged half a dozen younger men and it was obviously through them I must advance to seek out some person in command. Just then there appeared through a door behind the bar a well-put-together woman whose black sweater buttoned over cushiony breasts. With relief attempting a nonchalant smile, I cleared my throat and let emerge a rusty "Guten Abend! Bitte, haben Sie ein einzel Zimmer?" Shrewd-eyed and non-committally pleasant, she appeared the very synthesis of French and German lady innkeeper. I must settle for a double room at five dollars, little reduced from the price for a couple, a situation I would frequently encounter; for the first time on this journey I was given twin beds to mess up alone.

The glass of hot tea I descended for shortly was to hold me until the following night. At that later time, the snow having let up a little, I persuaded myself, sore throat, ailing ear, probable fever and all, to emerge from the comforting featherbed. Dressing speedily lest I change my mind, I stepped into the wintry street.

# # #

I went directly to the railroad station to investigate schedules to the South. Gone were all plans for ambling slowly down, taking in Trier, Germany and Alsatian France; Basel, Switzerland and Napoleon’s route through the French Alps. The Alps and Basel now, I berated myself, surely you must have been verukt! There would be a train again tomorrow night at seven; I had missed today's by half an hour.

The decision made, I took heart and entered the station's convenient first class dining room, knowing that in many cities abroad these are excellent and not expensive. In respect for my condition, I bypassed the country's gastronomical specialties of black pudding and sausages, quenelles with sauerkraut, jellied suckling pig and quetch tart. But the vegetable soup arrived pureed and subtle of flavor and the delicacy of the mushroom omelet too bespoke a French heritage. The white wine served was certainly a local moselle—for Luxembourg shares with the Germans that joy-making river. Shortly I took further heart and a little more wine and, as always rendered more perceptive by its warming trickle through my system, became aware of the antics of my waiter, a short swart man who every few minutes would, with great composure, make for a certain outlying table to sip from the glass of beer cached there and, so headed, brook no interference from his clients. Between trips he would take time out to pause and pat the silky head of a little boy and jest with the mother. It may have taken rather longer to get served and settle one's account, but it was great atmosphere.

The following morning with the help of Madame I phoned my friend Bob in Switzerland. Yes, it was wise, he thought, to head directly south, for it was snowing in Basel also....If I would arrive instead for the first of May I'd surely find it interesting.

Afterward I sat at a red-clothed booth and ordered breakfast. Attacking the task with my meager fund of German and French I managed to make my simple wants understood. Having witnessed my prowess in both languages, three young girls with gleaming long hair at an adjoining table were quite visibly startled when they noticed that the book I read was English. Freshmen from a small college in my home state, they had come to Switzerland with a student ski group and, considering their ten days better spent seeing something of Europe, had rented a small car and gone blithely off along the snowy mountain roads. They had "done" Paris and were heading now for Frankfurt, then Strasbourg, then back to join their group in flying home. Three eighteen-year-old girls from a small Illinois town...foolhardy you say? Yet what wouldn't we have given in our youth to have the chance! Europe then was the impossible dream, our reality the Depression.

I checked myself out of the Wellington, my bag into a locker at the station. Unable off-season to spend the day in exploration of the country's villages by train or bus as I had hoped, I had no option but to set forth by foot to renew acquaintance with the city until train time.

The snow had stopped, but an icy blast whipped my legs as I started across the regal Pont Adolph that spans the Vallee de Petrusse of ancient edifices and fortifications and deposits one in the neighborhood of the old town. When at last I reached the other side my ear was throbbing wildly. I fled the broad boulevards that overlook the valley, entering gratefully the relatively sheltered narrow streets. In the old shopping district I made straight for a department store, to take up warmth. There a soft wool scarf of turquoise held promise of a sunlit Mediterranean and at ninety Luxembourg francs (fifty to the dollar) I acquired the shining hope, acquired as well a comfort to bind up my misery—the aching ear that pulsed and echoed and throat grown rawer steadily.

And rather sadly I went slinking through those ancient cobbled streets, exploring graceful squares with statued horsemen at their centers and on their fringes the impressive mansions of nobility. Nodding to the old Grand Ducal Palace from the sixteenth century, I arrived in time at the central Place d'Armes. And when I saw a tiny tea shop entered eagerly, ordered hot tea and buttered biscuits and huddled in the cozy nest as long as decently I could, from my corner watching seemingly contented matrons meet and gossip, come and go as I stayed on. Then I happened on a movie house and with glee for thirty francs bought up two hours of utter womb-like warmth and darkness, nodding intermittently as a middling fever crept on upward to envelop me, then lay and simmered on my cheek and brow. The charmingly accented dubbed-in English Mastroiani spoke might just as well have been Italian—or Luxembourgeois, for that matter.

Later, at a dim café I dined on onion soup, a sausage and a tall glass of moselle. At a long bare wooden table a few old men sat over beer, straining in the cavernous lack of light to read the newspapers one finds in such Germanic places coiled about rollers, courtesy of the house.

I left there for the station.

Chapter Three: THE AVIGNON CONNECTION

It was snowing at Metz, an hour's distance, where I changed to the express from Paris. Plunging southward this would carve a swathe through France, meet the Rhone at Lyon and accompany it to Arles, then part company, cutting eastward to Marseilles. Thence it would skirt the Mediterranean, deposit passengers along the Riviera and complete its mission at Ventimiglia on the Italian border. Just thinking those names was a comfort, though vestiges of snow persisted to Lyon, reached in the middle of the night. There, peering through the window to where I knew it lay, I could sight the Rhone, grown majestic and powerful since leaving Lac Leman—Lake Geneva as we say—now heading down to skim the western precincts of Provence, eventually to branch and form the delta of the Camargue and then, its power spent, its work performed, to join the Mediterranean.

But I am ahead of my story. I succeeded in finding a vacant train compartment, possible on occasion in first class. You know the European compartment...only recently, in the newer models and particularly the crack trains that whip across the continent, has the trend deserted it for the rows of double seats that line a center aisle, familiar to Americans.

In hermit mood, delighted with the privacy, I ventured shortly to raise the armrests that divided my upholstered bench in three, stretched out full length and with coat as cover prepared for a fair night's sleep, courting it with a book. This was not to be, however, for within the half-hour I had company.

She came blustering into my compartment in the wake of an imposing bosom, spraying me with her machine-gun French. I slowed her down at once, giving her to understand here was no fit companion for a night-long marathon in that language. So she tried her German, and had less of it than I. Clutching and rubbing hands together in vigorous pantomime, then gripping voluminous scarves together at her throat, every little while she would shout out for my benefit, "Ay, kalt, kalt, kalt!" and between times, "J'ai froid, j'ai froid!" for a more satisfying catharsis. It was indeed cold and growing colder and neither she nor I could regulate the mechanism on the wall where it said chauffage. Nor could the subsequent stream of gentlemen she brought around and browbeat into trying.

The woman was Belgian, lived twenty kilometers from Brussels and had been on board the train since its Paris origin. Why she was only now descending on my compartment I did not comprehend; perhaps an earlier partner had fallen stubbornly asleep and she sought new fields to conquer with her chatter.

She explained, and made me understand somehow, that during the course of two world wars most Belgians had picked up smatterings of German and English both, from the various invading and/or liberating forces. She had also studied English in school long years ago, she said, and to demonstrate tried out on me some remarkable utterances as her eyes receded vaguely into memory and let reflexes spew the phrases forward from her youth. O-pain ze door-r-r! Shoot ze veen-dow! Ze pain lies ohn ze tah-ble! A weird, a crazy mirror image of our high school French.

My lady friend had taken two weeks off from keeping someone's books and was en route to Cannes, where she hoped to cure an ailing throat. In exchange for the detailed information on her plans, the merest fraction of which I followed, she was pressing me now to tell mine. Whither was I headed, for how long a time and why? Which wasn't easy, for I hadn't quite decided. Still mulling over in my mind as we sped south two major possibilities, I kept vacillating even now. Earlier plan: to proceed directly to Marseilles, spend most of the day in a hasty look at the city, then continue on to the little town of Sète, a few hours to the west along the Mediterranean in the direction of Barcelona, there to spend the night, then have a look at it as well. Later plan: to transfer in Avignon to a train that would take me on to Sète, temporarily deleting the Marseilles visit.

You see, I knew firmly that Barcelona would be my concentration point in Spain, but though I planned also to put down somewhat briefer roots some place in the South of France, I wasn't certain where. Marseilles and Sète being the major candidates, I had thought to look them over going down, later plan accordingly.

But France was still too cold for me and any current stops were going to be minimal. To scurry madly about the colorful teeming city I anticipated Marseilles to be and then to hurry in exhaustion on to Sète made increasingly little sense as I debated it.

Pressed for a decision by the Belgian woman, I chose the less rigorous alternative. How astonished she became that I, an American, should be heading for a town that she herself had never heard of! Especially when, as she urged, I could be accompanying her to Cannes, warm and sunny now, she did not doubt, and certainly endowed with a resort ambiance such as one would never find in Sète. Had I relatives there? A friend perhaps...this, leering up at me. Then why in the world? Even the prospect of an early removal to Barcelona did nothing to elicit her approval: no doubt Barcelona she considered heathen wilderness.

Later in the night as we shook awake from fitful slumber at station stops to stare dazedly out the window, once I introduced her to sugarless American chewing gum—recent substitute for cigarettes—and, again, received a rich, sweet, foil-wrapped Belgian chocolate cream.

Then we were slowing to a halt in Avignon and I was searching through the window in excitement for the walls and other sights familiar from an earlier year and pulling my bones together and my bag from the overheard shelf. A fond farewell, my kalt-froid lady!

# # #

At six in the morning the railroad station of even a lovely old Provençal town like Avignon, onetime refuge of the popes and known by little children everywhere who dance vicariously through the generations Sur le pont d'Avignon...tout en rond!—even such a town's station at six can be dreary.

Hastily I check the schedule posted in the station and in addition check the schedule with the man who checks all tickets as you leave the platform for the station and both are agreed that in forty-five minutes there will be a train direct, Oui direct, to Sète.

Seeking to appease my thirst while seated relaxed awaiting the train, I enter the station buffet. It is gray and dismal, the tables filled and sleepy people's baggage strewn about the floor. A quick eau minerale at the counter, then, to escape the blustery cold of the deserted platform, I head for the waiting room. Here too all is drab and crowded and discouraging. Two peasant-appearing women sit heads nodding, bundles stashed about chunky legs. Several men seem North African, small and olive-skinned and mustached. A ruddy-cheeked sailor boy lies snoring, scarlet pom-pom bobbing rhythmically on his beret; beside his outstretched form on the only available bit of bench I perch but briefly. Platform again. Pacing I happen on a first class waiting room, uncrowded...I had been in second class I realize. Everything is segregated in this world of ours, one way or another....A swift upsurge of solidarity with second class keeps me from entering to join the bourgeoisie.

Further along, an elaborate model in a glass case reveals the sequence of cars in the anticipated train. I study it carefully and at length. Then, when the train finally arrives, manage anyway to get fouled up by mail cars and wagon lits because I had failed to understand the coding of the model, and at the critical moment find myself completely isolated from the first class cars to which I am entitled and having to settle for second class, which—solidarity or no—is probably going to be crowded.

I climb on board extremely eager for a window seat because the stretch of France we shall be passing through I have never seen except in imagination, and that many times. It is difficult to define my interest in this part of southern France, further to the west, not what one ordinarily conceives of as the fabulous French Southland.

Confronting me is a solid row of compartments whose doors have been slammed shut, shades drawn against invasion; the corridor's windows too are effectively blacked out, so that all is dark and hushed. In the adjoining car, the same situation...how to proceed? I take the plunge, wrenching open one compartment door and then another, for which I am awarded many evil looks. At length I have unearthed a bench where with just a light trip over some large protruding feet and a slight nudge of my hip, I have effected a berth for myself between two drowsing figures. Second class has four seats on either side and lacks the soft upholstery.

Aside from the unfavorable position, I am unable to see out the window because the shades are down, and I am trapped, though extremely anxious to take in the rapidly vanishing scene. I shall only be on board an hour and a half, I reason, after which time these drooping voyageurs will be rid of me. Shortly I begin to clear my throat and fidget and when the woman on the window stirs murmur "permettez?" and reach across to raise the shade....

Just barely in time to see the town of Tarascon and a wonderfully impressive castle which I suppose is that of Good King Rene, whom I greatly admire. He brought the muscatel grape to Provence and himself displayed a monumental yet jolly fondness for its product; mingling affably with the common people, he typified also the Renaissance man—was linguist, poet, painter, musician, mathematician, a gentleman and a scholar. Across the Rhone lies Beaucaire and another old castle. It is these two I think, that I shall later see illumined so enchantingly at night, for I shall travel this route repeatedly and at various hours and each time be enthralled anew.

Come the rooftops of Nimes, on which surely some master roofer of old got carried away and—with an endless supply of black and white and russet red tile tesserae—created a giant mosaic now blending in mellow patina. Sighting down a narrow street I glimpse a distant Roman ruin; but the town has vigor too, it is apparent, and sidewalk cafés that tantalize the viewer. A place I must one day explore.

Off to where I know the sea to lie there is the sense of a vast desolation ...flat wastelands and salt marshes, useless silted-up harbors and an old dead city with perfect walls.

Vineyard upon glorious vineyard now cover the landscape in various types of grape culture and varying stages of development. First come vines trained tall and branching into out-flung tiers. Then we are rushing past fields where new growth is cut back without mercy each spring to foster one thick trunk, while further along still other vines sit resting modestly on their knobs like berry bushes, aiming at the happy medium. And some are in leaf and some are in bud and some are just quietly thinking of growing.

And, as the train moves on, they all make me think with nostalgia of our neighbor Nick, back when the boys were young and we nurtured a summer garden.

Nick came from Italy and you might sometimes have to strain to understand his English, but you could always grasp his spirit. He was slight and wiry and usually wore an ancient battered hat on his grizzled hair. For a living he worked along the railroad tracks, but it was in his garden that he really came alive. Nick was the very soul of generosity, with his produce, expertise and homemade wine. He lived just across the road and would come over when he saw us working in the yard. Usually he would be bringing an especially fine squash or two, or a bagful of those enormous flat green beans whose seeds a relative sent from Italy, which he trained to climb so neatly up giant poles meticulously trimmed.

If there was something you needed to know about the broccoli Nick had the answer, but with the grapes he was positively wizard...they were his own true love. The pruning, he said, there lay the crux: as you pruned so grew the grape. We had planted ten, twelve vines along the wooden fence that marked the garden plot and some days, unhappy with the way we were about to botch the destiny of our little purple charges, he would take the shears, but always with a gentle tact, and with his own hand make the loving cut.

Nick was not averse to a little nip of something stronger than the nectar of the grape and could usually be coaxed into the kitchen for a break from honest toil. There around the table he would sometimes talk about his youth in Italy. Then he died one year and afterward our grapes were never very sweet again, as though preoccupied in mourning him.

# # #

Thus the train sped on through vineyards and between times there were cherry trees beginning to blossom out, to me just then a welcome sign of spring as I comforted a nagging ear.

Then we started moving down to meet the sea, past great etangs—the salt lagoons—and between waters and onto spits of land. We were splayed out along the Mediterranean when suddenly the melancholy stillness was intruded on and shattered by enormous tractors and mechanical shovels that dotted the shore together with the piers and bulwarks they had recently constructed.

The whole coastal area, I had read—the hundred and twenty miles from Marseilles to the Spanish border—is being revamped into resort-land, a vast mosquito-clearing, earth-moving hotel-building project designed to bring the Riviera to the rest of France's Mediterranean shore and with it a million vacationers.

But that dream—or nightmare, is it?—hasn't come alive just yet and it is not a Cannesian scene that I step off into when the station master calls out "Se-tuh, Se-tuh!" in the southern way.

Chapter Four: A TASTE OF LE MIDI

You've probably never heard of Sète. I hadn't myself until a while ago when I started day-dreaming about getting back to Spain and southern France.

My son and consultant on all things French was studying the map with me, both of us ever so far away from Philadelphia, when he pinpointed a wee dot just inside the curve of France's Mediterranean shore where it veers to head south toward the Spanish border. "You might just want to consider Sète," said Andy. He had spent his junior year of college at the University of Bordeaux and, having passed through Sète en route to Italy on one of his remarkably frequent vacation rambles, had found it an interesting town well off the beaten track, a combination not easily come upon these days.

So I started scouring materials for clues to Sète and, though these were scarce, learned it was founded in mid-seventeenth century expressly to provide another major French harbor on the Mediterranean, and that today it does in fact rank second to Marseilles as such. Built on the silt on a narrow sandy strip between the sea and its lagoon, Sète has a harbor not likely to silt up like so many of its neighbors'; it may be a Johnny-come-lately, but it is here to stay.

The derivation of the name of its province I found interesting. Quite literally, Languedoc is the land where the language of "oc" is spoken, "oc" being the ancient dialect for "yes" in the South, in place of the northern "oui."

Some place I saw Sète described as "a typical example of a little old township in the Midi...canals...colorful...lively." That was all it needed to clinch my interest. But how could I possibly have got that across to the Belgian woman?

Now here I am in Sète and it isn't looking at all like my preconception —a quaint fishing village—as I emerge from the station onto a very long bridge and on my right floats an enormous steamship and on my left can be seen others in the distance where a sizeable harbor portends to bulge.

Well, I caution myself...whoever said fishing village, Macey? It is instead a charming old seaport.

So I am talking to myself in my maiden name (an old habit) and sniffing the morning air which is wonderfully crisp and unpolluted and smells of fish and the sea. It isn't really warm, but the sun is sharply bright and the tree-lined streets have that dry and dusty feel of a southern town. Walking past several small nondescript hotels, I am reluctant to settle for one until I see what else is offered. I am headed for what I figure is the heart of town, criss-crossing one canal and another and following their quays.

Sète approaching nine o'clock is a French town just recently wakened to greet the day and there are still those late risers who carry the long fresh loaves down the street or slung across bicycle seats. Women can be seen at their house fronts, industriously sweeping off the stoop, while others hang out of second story windows with their bedclothes, disseminating the fresh day's news. Two little girls with braided heads already play a kind of hopscotch on the pavement, regaling each other with perfect French as they balance on one foot then leap, sounding so very cultured! which never ceases to amaze. In the canals, where boats in great variety of size and color rest tied up at the quays and some glide in no hurry down the middles, there is after all in evidence commercial fishing.

But I must find some nook and rest myself awhile—the town will await my pleasure. I have just passed an inviting hotel on the main quay which I know will be indulgently expensive. As expected, nothing in the next two blocks appeals; the blue bag is by now uncommonly clumsy and I uncompromisingly tired and I do a quick about-face and am soon checked into Le Grand Hotel with its three stars and its glass-topped, palm-fronded patio at the center, presaging the Spain that is to come. I have picked the best Sète has to offer. The tab is twenty-five francs without private bath—just over $4.50 American, I calculate shortly when I exchange some bills at the bank down the street. I fear I shall never strike my seven dollar daily average spending this kind of money on hotel repeatedly, but then I did save a whole night's lodging en route, look at it that way.

I take coffee and a delectable croissant, first of my season, at a small patisserie, then, seeking relief for my sore throat, locate a pharmacie.

I start off with "pour le mal de...ugh..." poking at my throat. The dear man figures it out at once, supplies the word "gorge" so that henceforth I will know, and for fifty cents I have a generous supply of exceedingly tasty scarlet gum drops containing, the label says, codein, opium and belladonna. They seem ever so much more effective than the overpriced prescriptions that I get at home.

And as in retrospect I consider the contents of those chewy lozenges and the rate at which I gulped them...! Small wonder that after the briefest of turns through town, all I wanted was to lie abed in that soothing room with its wine red carpet, its flowered red wallpaper suitably Provincial, French doors flung open on the tiny grillwork balcony that overlooked tiled roofs ascending a steep hill. To lie there and luxuriate, my poor sick ear pressed deep into the pillow and I chomping away on those consoling gum drops, growing mellower all the time.

It was morning again before I managed to depart those friendly quarters, and then only after pampering myself with breakfast sent up. The hot water stretched the pot to many cups of coffee and I ate a croissant and then a wonderful crusty baguette. The tray held a dish of delicate butter curls and another of the preserves you get served all over Europe—it tastes like sunshine and fresh peach, just barely simmered and not all slick and sweet.

Also on the tray appeared a copy of that morning's Midi Libre. It was not wasted on me, for as I breakfasted I was assured by Monsieur Pompidou that, although he wished to maintain the principle of autonomy, the disorders in the universities would not be tolerated any longer...which somehow rang familiar.

Once more I deposit my bag at a railroad station and here everybody combines, despite the language hurdle, to provide in southern French cordiality what information I require and a reservation on the Catalan Talgo at l6:l4 o'clock.

Now begins my exploration of the town. And the steamship anchored near the bridge is actually a school for seamen, while all about that harbor range the warehouses of aperitíf firms with familiar names.

Weaving again along quais of the canals that lace together the lagoon and sea through the narrow land strip that is Sète, I reach the heart of town. There to find its town hall on a barren dusty square that serves, quite evidently, as political center and gathering place for the men of town. Dominating it are the older ones and they all wear black berets and seem at peace. Standing about in scattered groups appear the youth contingent and these shuffle and paw at the ground, impatient to be off to more enticing

cities; the haze of dust they raise obscures the mundane probability, allows the tantalizing prospect of a grander way of life. Tacked about generously are political posters and to one side of the square a storefront Socialist headquarters has not yet opened for the day, cutting short my debate on whether to attempt communication.

In another direction I discover the gathering place for women in the indoor market with its strong-smelling fish stands and counters heaped with dew-fresh produce. Outside its entrance stands a random collection of flimsy booths with racks of clothing most of which seems shockingly overpriced and sleazy and I wonder as I often will again in small French towns, how the people can afford to buy it. Jumbled in a heap of miscellany, a few sweat shirts with the familiar disarmament symbol leap to my attention, such as I will later find in other towns and countries.

Beckoning from afar, the Virgin suddenly appears above the rooftops and when I find her she is no mirage but perched on top a church I reach laboriously by climbing many steps. What a gaudy sight she must present at night in her halo of electric bulbs, the battery of powerful spotlights trained on her!

And having noticed here such adjectives as sleazy and gaudy, add now the word raucous. But remember that regardless, Sète is a nice sort of town. Raucous? Oh lordy yes! I was mystified at first to hear the music, interspersed by advertising, blaring from the air no matter where I turned. In time I traced it to loudspeakers set strategically all over town so that you are never out of hearing of them, any place, from nine till dusk—though they are silenced for siesta time, observed by Sète in good southern tradition. I recalled the description of the town as lively, a condition to which the obstreperous speakers may be taken to contribute. They contributed as well to my decision that there must be towns more fit for me to center out of while in southern France.

Along the docks I walk an esplanade, its sidewalk cafés not yet open for the season. But there are numerous stands where you can down a quick mussel or clam and small restaurants featuring seafood.

I lunch at an unpretentious small café on an exquisite fish soup—a tureen brimming with creamy bisque to be ladled over crusty bread and freshly grated fragrant cheese. But not until I have been subjected first to the demonic scrutiny of each of my fellow-diners and then, having failed to order the de rigeur full luncheon, to the glaze that curtains Madame's eye, apparent all the way from her commanding post behind the counter.

# # #

The Catalan Talgo is one of the Trans Europe Expresses, the swift and luxurious TEEs, therefore the obligatory reservation. Periodically there was soft and mellow piped-in music of an international variety. Adjustable seats arranged in pairs to flank the aisle were extremely comfortable and featured tables that pulled down in front as on a plane. They were color-coordinated with wall-to-wall carpeting and printed drapes that framed the picture windows. And the picture through those windows sounded a symphony so glorious it made you ache inside. We were racing mainly down a narrow ribbon of land, waters on either side skimmed by exotic white birds and on the right set off by hills beginning to turn mauve. We were cutting across connecting land links, the location of ponds shifting frequently, now on the left, now right, and the orchestrating sea was rarely out of sight. Once we passed a giant sand-like pile and I heard the woman seated just in front murmur to her companion, "Salz," and only then did I think about its being a product of the salt ponds. The land started growing rocky and the hills craggy and over it all that sense of a melancholy desolation. There was the juxtaposition of water and hills with an early dusk on them and the occasional wind-bent sea-bent Mediterranean pine.

Then comes the crescendo as the Pyrenees approach! Come the sentinel Pyrenees, the barrier Pyrenees that I shall hurdle, I shall vault, subdue and once more be in Spain.

Soon lilts a musical tremolo and in one of the special services dispensed on this special train, a charmingly modulated piped-in feminine voice informs us all in rapid succession: "Messieurs les voyageurs, la station prochaine est Perpignan ....Señores viajeros, la proxima estacion es Perpignan....Sehr geehrte Reisende, die nexte Banhof ist Perpignan....Ladies and gentlemen..." (you know the rest).

Perpignan turns an uninspired face to her railway station, but I remember what a lovely Spanish-tinged French town we found it on that first trip when, emerging reluctantly from our month in Spain, we picked up Andy at its youth hostel to drive with him through France. Remember doorways vivid with strings of colored beads or gypsy strips of cloth to keep out flies but let the summer breezes filter through.

Now the train advances to Cerbere on the French side and then Port Bou on Spain's side of the border. And the elderly Spanish woman in simple black across the aisle is being queried by the pair of inquisitorial Spanish guards who board, what is in the large cardboard box she is transporting and she answers, something that she just has bought...Madera, wood is all that I can catch. And they niggle and they fuss and finally they make her take it all apart, untie all the string, tear open all the sticky paper, unwrap all the tissue. Then they look inside and of course see nothing there to take exception to. Everyone is sympathetic with the woman as slowly she rebundles the clumsy, once neat package. A number of people in the car I had spotted earlier as Spaniards, but a big brassy blond up front now turns out to be as she addresses the car in general upon departure of the guards—and mostly I can understand what she is saying by her tone and gestures as she opens and displays an ample handbag: "Just consider," says she, indignant yet with humor, "all I could have stashed away in this enormous bag of mine. So, the horses' asses, do you suppose they open this to check its contents? No...they must pretend to do a job so they pick an old woman to bully!" Perhaps the epithet is there by implication only, but the brassy blond's contempt for the uniformed men, and that of the surrounding Spaniards all of whom concur enthusiastically, I shall see demonstrated many times in Spain—contempt, usually humorous contempt, instead of fear.

Then—brassy blond, old woman in black and all of us—having crossed the border we went plunging down the Costa Brava, fierce coast of tumultuous breakers dashed upon the rock, of jagged stone, of swirling foam, indented coves and outstretched arms and cliffs, ravines, then low-flung boulders. It was all there, waiting for me, Ay bellisima! it was all there.

Chapter Five: THE BIDET INCIDENT

I went by cab directly to the Hotel Gaudí as to an old friend, wanting mundane matters quickly settled so that I could rush into the streets on foot, gather them into my arms exulting, I am back! I've returned! Estoy aquí Barcelona mía! It took awhile till I could do all that however: the hotel, remembered from my previous stay, was booked up tight. That possibility had not occurred to me, thinking off-season, in March, there would be no problem, but some important commercial expositions were in town and Easter week not far away. A bit of cajolery and a half-hour's wait produced a double room, though only for the night; a large group expected the following morning meant I should have to shift for myself a few days before returning...that was the best they could manage. First things first; I accepted gratefully, flung my bag onto one of my beds and made for the Ramblas just around the corner, gulping in its magic essence as I crossed to tramp throughout the dark recesses of the Barrio Gótico.

There in its streets the night was choked with timeless mists that rose amid the worn stone underfoot, the steeply rearing walls, the cold gray arches threatening to close in. I was alone in courtyards where Columbus once had walked, my shadow tall before me in the lurid lamplight. A footstep fell behind me and a moment later joined me in my shadow and before it parted and moved on both ears of mine were pulsing wildly with a madly pumping heart and threatening to implode.

I fled to society and the Plaza San Jaime. Somewhere I had a cup of tea to soothe the grating rawness in my throat and a roll, I think, to fill the void. It must have been midnight when I flopped into bed exhausted, let the aching weariness wash over me for an appreciative moment, then immediately dropped off into a leaden sleep.

# # #

I was wakened by the jangling phone. Foggily I thought to myself as I realized where I was, Now who in heaven's name can be ringing me in Barcelona in the middle of the night!...jumped frantically out of bed to make for the phone, around the other side of the other bed...and landed in water a good two inches deep. I had just time to connect the ringing phone with the flooded floor before raising the receiver.

It was the night clerk, he too sounding frantic. I switched on a light as he shouted at me. Was it from my room the water was pouring through to the ceiling underneath! Meekly I admitted I was flooded and he banged down the phone to head upstairs. Splashing toward the bathroom I had barely time to chastise myself, You unmitigated idiot: you left the water running and on your very first night back in Barcelona flooded the Hotel Gaudí...you will be terribly embarrassed, no, mortified! you clumsy oaf. There was water in the bathroom too but it seemed lower. I checked then re-checked faucets: all shut tight. I thought perhaps a pipe had burst beneath the floor and then before I could figure what else to think the night clerk had arrived.

He checked the bathroom too, then dashed outside to bang excitedly on the door to the right of my room, mouthing continuous exclamations in his native Spanish. I had snatched up my robe and put it on but decided against shoes or slippers, likely to be ruined by the water. Groping for my handbag, I followed him barefoot into the hall. He emerged from next door...it wasn't there. Knocked on the door to my left. No response to continued pounding. He used his key to enter, the following moment came staggering back into the hallway shouting incoherently, motioning me desperately, wildly, to follow him back in.

The room appeared unoccupied, but one of the beds had been slept in. Some luggage, quite a lot, was standing around, tops open, things spilling out; a started carton of Chesterfields peeped from a carryall. About the room were neatly draped three or four sets of men's underwear, laundered and drying. I must have taken it all in automatically as I trailed the nearly fainting night clerk through swirling water into the bathroom. I felt like an Agatha Christie novel, I guess, for I looked at my watch and noted it was 2:l5.

Then I saw her. She was sitting on the john, naked, her boyish sexless figure terribly still, head hanging forward so the face was draped by long, lank, dark blond hair.

Adjacent to the toilet stood a bidet, and this it was that was causing the flood, for the bowl was running over, its drain all clogged with tissues and vomit.

"Is she dead!" I shouted, coming to active life at last as the passive nightmare quality of my involvement began to crumble before the very present horror of cold persistent fact.

The night clerk, a nice enough man about my age, had the presence of mind to turn off the bidet's faucet. But he was scared to death to touch the nude blond flesh.

Briskly I shook her by her bony shoulders, shook her repeatedly while wondering what else I should be doing.

Her eyes refused to open, but after an interval she whimpered faintly. Thank god! at least she wasn't dead, completely gone.

"Get her coat from the closet and let's get her up!" I yelled. We've got to get her up and keep her moving! She must have taken something...taken or been given some kind of drugs!"

The clerk seemed incapable of movement, still immersed in his own private nightmare.

The girl refused to budge, blond hair still hanging forward, arms limply at her sides—a dead weight to my frantic tugging efforts.

"Is there a doctor in the hotel!" I persisted, the spectator within me fully knowing how melodramatic I must be sounding—but so was the whole fantastic situation, it couldn't be helped.

The clerk, preoccupied with flooded floors, seemed disinclined to fetch a doctor since she wasn't absolutely dead. And I suppose his basic responsibility as he saw it was to maintain the hotel in proper shape. Alternately he would wring his hands, point to the ankle-deep water and raise eyes and arms heavenward, imploring the almighty for advice on what to do.

But the only response came from me. And I wasn't all that full of heavenly calm myself as I shouted to go raise up a doctor, then send someone along with buckets and mops to sop up the floors.

There was no one else on duty, he countered stubbornly, no doctor in the house.

"Then phone a doctor and to hell with the floors!" I suggested briskly and he disappeared.

I was tugging at the girl's arms and slapping at her face when at last she murmured dazedly, "Hey, watcha doin'? Watcha doin' to me!" I couldn't raise her from the toilet, still, but her eyes were half slit open and I had swept the vomit-fringed hair from in front of her face.

Now I knew that I had seen her earlier that evening, with her distinctive pale soft squashy face and stick-slim figure. She had been standing in the lobby surrounded by baggage, close behind a slender young man who, like me and several others, crowded the desk awaiting word on a room for the night.

A young American, probably a naval officer—of whom there were several staying here with their families, I had noticed in the lobby—entered with his wife and little girl. Most likely they were from the room the other side of mine and, wakened, had tossed their clothes on hurriedly. He was able to raise the naked girl and get her moving and I draped her coat about her shoulders, for warmth and to guard her dignity against those hostile eyes. I was for walking her—thanks again to Agatha—and tried to keep her going, but he favored dumping her on the bed and letting her be and I couldn't manage it alone.

He was furious with the girl, kept glaring about the room and pointing to damp jockey shorts, all the while restating the obvious: "There's been a man here, I tell you!" Then he shouted at her in an ugly tone, "Where's your boy friend?" Called her a little fool and worse, tried repeatedly to interrogate her...lord and master over all his countrymen, arbiter of their morals. While all this time his wife just stood there, "the little woman," inert, unfeeling, a lump with her miniature lump of an offspring safe from contamination in her arms. No reaching out, no flicker of warmth toward another woman, another human.

It was no great loss when La Sagrada Familia, American style, shortly made their exit.

Unable now to walk the girl I kept her propped up on the bed, the sheet about her; it wasn't easy, for she struggled mightily to stretch out flat and be allowed to sleep. I shook her hard and slapped her face at intervals

to keep her conscious and awake. When she protested hazily, "Hey stop that... whatcha doin'?" it made me worry that I had no right, that this too was violation of her human dignity. I held a wet cloth to her forehead as a gentler measure and of that she seemed appreciative.

Briefly the night clerk reappeared, having pulled himself together and looking far calmer now than I was feeling. He had phoned a doctor

he assured me, but I was fretting at the length of time it took—time that was crucial, maybe—and the fact that I could not rouse her fully and must fight to keep her propped. And she was steadily fussing meantime, annoyed at having her hair smoothed away from her eyes and not being left to sleep in peace.

At length I tried to reason with her, or at the very least just talk her awake. "Look, I'm your friend. And I'm not here to judge you, just to help in any way I can. Believe me," I pleaded, "it's just that I want to help you if I can. The clerk has called a doctor. Please, please be good and stay awake until he comes!"

Smiling toward that pathetically wan countenance I tried again: “You think I'm a middle-aged busybody, now admit it!”

At this she finally looked up at me, that sideways sort of owlish look, and softly said, "Did I say that? I didn't say that, did I?" Then in a markedly different tone, wondering and philosophic, "Sometimes we do such foolish things...."

Just as she seemed to be reviving she started turning green. I asked if she needed to vomit and she nodded faintly, unwilling though to try to make it to the bathroom. Before I could work out other arrangements she began to retch and then immediately to puke. I tried to keep her dark blond hair clear of the odorous stuff and to rest the wet cloth against her brow. Strands of spaghetti in the vomit clung to the wool of the blanket as she heaved. The obscene torrent gushed and gurgled over the bed in a frothy stream and trickled to the floor in sour pools.

Then in the midst of that terrible mess the doctor appeared and he was the handsomest young Spanish doctor you ever could imagine, his beautiful dark eyes deep with compassion and—how else can I describe it?—Spanish soul. I moved to the end of the room near the door and left the field to him as with gentle hands he held her head over the side of the bed, encouraging her to vomit up whatever else was coming.

She must have felt much better afterward. When he wrapped the blood pressure cuff around her upper arm and squeezed the bulb she asked to know the reading, said she was a nurse. Enfermera, I translated for the doctor. What else he did for her I cannot know, for now I felt awkward standing there and retreated to my room.

I was trying to soak up water from my floor with towels, blankets, bedspreads—whatever came to hand—when the phone rang. Again it was the night clerk: would I ask the girl to settle with the doctor?

I found the doctor packing up and his patient looking almost human. I was about to advance the money until morning, the simplest procedure, when the night clerk arrived and handled it himself.

In full command now, he turned from talking with the doctor to report she had been given an injection, would sleep through the remainder of the night. "The doctor says she should wake in the morning feeling normal. You're welcome to use the other bed if you wish, but he seems to believe she will be all right." Again I felt perhaps I had no right to meddle. I turned to where she lay exhausted and pale but serene, slim blondness tucked under the covers. "I'll be next door with just the wall between our heads...a knock will bring me running."

Then the doctor, that lovely Spanish doctor, leaving, came to where I stood and gripped my hand in silence and gave me a wonderfully warm and empathetic Spanish look.

# # #

I had returned from an early breakfast, the dining room's first customer, and packed my few things and straightened up as best I could, when the maid came knocking. I must vacate the room, there was someone else needing it. Obviously it was going to take some fairly drastic preparation too, in view of drenched floor and water-logged blankets and rugs and towels.

"Next door," I said pointing, certain she would have been briefed on the night's occurrences, "I wonder how the young woman is next door. I'd like to see her again before I leave. Do you know if she's awake, Señora?"

"Su amiga también, your friend is also going to have to go." And with neither knock nor hesitation she had used her key to open the neighboring door.

The bed was empty. Hearing us, the girl emerged from the bathroom into the room that had already assumed a measure of order. The so-familiar clutter of the night before was gone; the jockey-shorts had disappeared, along with the vomit-encrusted towels and blankets. She was still dressing but fairly well composed.

"Forgive my barging in like this...the maid...I didn't really mean to. I wanted to be sure you were all right before I left, that's all. But I didn't mean to be meddling...." How clumsy I was being!

Actually, she reassured me, she was glad I had stopped by. "If you don't mind staying a few minutes I'd like to ask you something...can't remember, somehow, all that happened here last night, but I have this vague picture in my mind, it must have been you I remember. You were taking care of me, weren't you?"

I nodded and she went on. "Wow, that's really embarrassing...I'm a nurse: I'm always taking care of others, not the other way around." She fumbled a moment with the hair-brush in her hand, looked down at it and then away, to a corner of the room. She had washed her hair, I could see, and it was gleaming. "I hadn't had anything to eat all day, and then at night we had a little beer and some spaghetti...I guess...that must have been what made me sick...."

"Nothing else at all?" I couldn't resist the gentle probe.

"No, nothing. It had to be the spaghetti and beer." She stopped fiddling with the brush and her troubled eyes met mine. "Tell me, this friend I'm traveling with...I'm really worried....Did he come back to the room at all last night while you were here? You didn't see him? Or hear him later on?"

I shook my head. What if he had returned and I'd been lying in the other bed—how awkward!

“He went out last night and evidently hasn't been back at all. I'm really worried what might have happened to him!"

"The maid is hustling us both out now, I'm afraid. But you could leave word at the desk," I suggested. Would he be likely to return though, after what happened here last night? I asked if she had some place else to go.

She nodded, said they had been able to find a new hotel the night before. Then added hopefully, "That's right, he could be waiting there, couldn't he? I'd better pack his things and leave them in the lobby."

I thought how soggy the contents of their bags must be and wondered if she knew it yet. I had picked what I could up off the floor and stashed it above the water level, but had likely been too late.

Finally she took the plunge, asked how all of us half-formed figures of her reluctant recollection had found our way to her room the previous night.

I explained about the flood and the stuffed-up bidet and her sitting naked on the toilet looking dead. Then thought, Well, I'm sure that poor girl wants never to see my face again...or the Hotel Gaudí. What happened earlier that night I suppose I'll never know. Or if her young friend with the sensitive look ever reappeared to claim his luggage, from which, as I entered her room in that first grotesque moment, I had noted a slim volume peeping out the top. I figure anyone who compounds his burden by lugging the English poets all over Europe must be a little special, whatever are his faults. Maybe it was this involved me more emotionally in that affair of theirs. From that time on, at any rate, I had sort of family status around the hotel—with the bond especially deep between me and the night clerk, who later told me that according to the doctor we had reached the girl just in time....Had the water seeped through the ceilings just a little more slowly we could have appeared on the scene too late.

Chapter Six: THE COUNT OF BARCELONA

To locate lodging for the next three days would not be easy; the hotel had phoned all over town and come up with nothing but a de luxe vacancy, and this I was disinclined to settle for just yet. But my bag was temporarily lodged at the Gaudí, the sun shone brightly in a perfect sky and I was footloose in Barcelona with the promise of days and maybe weeks ahead there. Then too, the drama of the night's experience had left me feeling philosophic. I started down the Ramblas, delighting after three long years in watching sunlight filter through the rustling leaves of its massive plane trees.

Mostly, in Barcelona, I wandered the town, it's that kind of place. And wherever I ventured, whatever undertook, I was traversing at some point that most personable of boulevards that throbs and pulses with the people, with the life of that dynamic city. At times down the middle of that great wide mall through fragrant flower stalls, beneath the trees, past vendors of little pastel birds in many-tiered cages, pausing at the fountain to watch a jug get filled. Browsing the always open kiosks to see what intriguing book titles I could spot this afternoon or to buy a paper in the morning, a postcard in the night. Again, along the narrow traffic street that guards it on the north, where shops and cafés crowd and jostle one another and you gain entry to the many little cross-streets that wind through the Barrio Gótico, the quarter not really altogether Gothic but sufficiently ancient and atmospheric. Or on the alternate traffic-bearing street, emerging from my morning coffee and stopping at the huge and satisfying Boqueria market to buy an orange or just to feast my eyes on some thirty kinds of olives and numberless variety of shining squirmy creatures of the sea and to observe as well their buyers and their vendors. On past the Teatro del Liceo, which Bareceleños proudly claim rates first among the world's opera houses in acoustics, second only to La Scala in capacity. Then ducking and dodging the solid flow of traffic to join again the saunterers and bustlers down the middle and in so doing spot the mailbox, therein to drop the card completed over breakfast. And if I am tired I rent a seat briefly and should a thirst threaten I seek a sidewalk table.

But this particular morning I must buckle down to that unavoidable piece of business and provide myself with temporary housing. Or, it could be, more permanent, since I had actually considered spending the bulk of my Barcelona stay in a pensión, presumably cheaper than hotels and providing closer contact with the people. (Now what could be closer than my first night's experience?)

Ranging down the Ramblas I am checking out hotels I pass and absolutamente nada! is available. I turn into the Calle Fernando and since it is Saturday that nice old shopping street is jammed with the ladies of Barcelona and I am momentarily sidetracked into joining them as they yearn toward handbags of luscious Spanish leather, rough grained or butter-soft, lustrous or opaque.

Then again I have gained the Plaza San Jaime. Poking my head into the elegant fifteenth century courtyard of the Deputation Palace, I resolve to return in short, then cross the square for a fleeting look at the old town hall. The aura of mystery of last night's sojourn in these parts has faded with the dawn and despite the handsome buildings that surround it, the square is shorn of romance by the cars parked at its core, dominating it, robbing it of the warmth that should be integral to plazas. Sic transit gloria mundae, overcome by gasoline fumes. Still, it is the descendent of the Roman agora that flourished here and in that tradition on this spot are headquartered the political centers of local and provincial life...so it is said.

I enquire at several pensións in the vicinity, then at the Plaza del Angel, a little beyond, a couple more. I am getting winded from the three or four steep flights required to reach each one before I know it is for nada. While still at home planning, I had noted several attractive pensión possibilities in the Paseo de Gracia area, where I plan to head next. One is in the Gaudí-designed Pedrera building. But since every other economy-minded American now in Barcelona has perused that self-same travel reference thoroughly, chances are slim indeed.

Having turned down Via Layetana, a broad impersonal commercial thoroughfare, in time I come upon the shingle of the Pensión F, recommended nowhere. Peering in the doorway of the building's lobby I spot an elevator and mount in the clanging metal mesh cage to the pensión's location at the

very top.

The young man at the desk is prepared to give me short shrift, but at once there appears a distinguished elderly gentleman who favors giving me a room. A pince nez rests on his long thin nose and he carries himself with the air of an hidalgo. Here, were it not for Don Juan de Borbón, stands the last of the Counts of Barcelona! Debate ensues between the youth and him, centering, as I make it out, on the more remunerative possibility of renting the last remaining vacancy as a double with full pensión for two. The old aristocrat wins, presumably using a bird-in-the-hand argument. Before ever I have seen the room, the fact is accomplished . The charge is 250 pesetas daily, or slightly over $3.50 for room with bath and full board—no doubt inflated for my benefit—and I have gratefully sworn to stay a three-day minimum.

By way of congratulating me on gaining entry to these sacred portals, the Count of Barcelona is describing the excellence of the pensión's food and so doing employs the characteristic gesture of thumb and three fingers brought together to pursed lips, eyes come alive above as with a glimpse of paradise.

This kind of gesture, requiring little vocal shoring up, I found so typical of Spaniards—indeed of Mediterraneans. Seeing it, I was reminded of that time in Tarragona when Mike and I were about to mount the ancient ramparts and the friendly guard was cautioning us to beware of purse snatchers: he was looking extremely wise and, head cocked, tapping away at an eyelid. Later in this trip I would come upon that unmartial-looking youth on the train between Seville and Mérida who would use the universal money gesture, tapping his fingers into his palm to explain why he had donned the uniform. Before that—in Tangier—my girl friend on the ladies' balcony of the synagogue would run the whole gesticulations gambit to describe woman's role in that situation: The woman is supposed to—now nodding her head in approbation—finger to the eye, then, still nodding thus—finger to the ear; but not allowed to—shaking her head with disapproving vigor and countenance to match—finger to the lips.

Now as the old gentleman is vouching so fervently for the board at his pensión I ask if there will be paella served at lunch, for it is a dish of which I am inordinately fond. "Oh paella," he says to me in Spanish, "We had paella yesterday, Señora." When he shows me to my room I see a radiator and finding it cold to the touch enquire about heat, still sorely needed at this time. "Oh calificación," he responds, "Sí Señora, calificación we had yesterday... it is turned on when required." I open the door to my bathroom and finding the hot water faucet running cold, anticipate what he will reply to that; but no, give the devil his due....The hot water tank, he explains and demonstrates, starts heating water when you switch on the bathroom light. It also takes up half the room and is a hazard to life and limb and an extremely noisy bastard when you set it perking.

The changeover from hotel to pensión was quickly accomplished. I brought back from the Ramblas a bunch of splashy orange calendulas and another of white daisies; arranged together to overflow the bathroom glass they helped greatly to enliven that chill and dimly-lit depressing room. I set them on the painted table underneath the window which looked out upon a dark and miserable air well. It was a small room, crowded by the lumpy double bed and musty wardrobe where I hung my few belongings Table and walls alike were shiny with the shabby bilious green somehow so popular for ugly bedrooms the world over. Two small bed stands, no more attractive in their muddy varnish, were wedged between the bed and walls on either side. I slung over the handle of one door the yellow leather shopping bag I'd brought along that stemmed from Heidelberg, over another a colorful silk scarf from Italy and on a hook my fleecy coral bathrobe. Placed familiar slippers near that monstrous bed and several books and maps on those ugly tables. Laid out comb and brush etc. in that icy bathroom where I only once got up the courage to strip for a bath. And I was in business for three days, but doubted I would stick it out for longer. Most of the time endured in that room was spent between the covers.

The food at the Pensión F ran heavily to starches and was probably typical lower-class local fare. There was a flavorful garbanzo (chick pea) stew, noodle soups, French fries, pork chops which I recall being served twice in the very same day. And we did get paella once while I was there, among its ingredients several doleful-eyed shrimps with heads intact that peered up at me pathetically from among the savory saffron rice.

The little dining room's decor was basically utilitarian yet perfectly clean. Oilcloth that had seen many a damp rag covered the tables, each of which bravely held a slender glass vase with a few paper flowers. Throughout each meal the TV set blared noisily. I had a table near a window and at a larger one adjoining sat four men, almost always clothed in their blue laborers overalls, who appeared to be regulars. There was a handsome Chinese gentleman I spoke with (in English) once or twice and several other patrons

seemed to be transitory. Sometimes the Count of Barcelona would be dining at his table near the door and, passing to enter or to leave, I would toss him a Bon appetit or we would exchange some simple pleasantry.

I hit it off well with little Nicola, our twelve-year-old waitress, an Andaluza with eager bright black eyes. She would make it a point to bring me a really nice big orange or throw in a little pear if I chose the apple, for dessert was invariably fresh fruit. When I called a halt as she dished out the noodle soup she would want to keep pouring, and if I didn't clean my plate she would wonder aloud if it had not pleased me. For my part, I would bring her occasionally a small gift of salted almonds or a chocolate bar. Nicola was just beginning to bud and blushed hotly when the men in blue overalls would tease her about one thing or another, as they unmercifully did.

I had my own bottle of wine, preserved for me from meal to meal. I would find it waiting on my table, customary procedure when taking the pensión in countries where wine is customarily ordered by the bottle.

I remember how amused we were, Mike and I, when at the Albergo Edelweiss our bottles of Valtellina and Valpolicella, one white, one red, came back marked Ingles....

It was with a vast relief that we pulled into Aprica after a hair-raising ride in a blinding downpour through one of the more curvaceous passes of the Italian Alps. The following day when we woke and looked out the window there was nothing to be seen: the town had been swallowed by a cloud and we were in the middle of it, detached from all the world. We were obviously not proceeding on our way just yet.

Aprica is a family-type ski and summer resort much frequented by Romans—the modern kind—and the weather being what it was there were many children strewn about the hotel's lounges in various stages of boredom and unrest. We noticed early that the game of checkers was popular among them. One by one the youths were challenging one particular signora, who was taking on all comers with a regal dignity and polishing them off with dispatch. Ensconsed on her sofa in the midst of an admiring court, she was quite evidently Aprica's Queen of the Checkers.

Mike is awfully good at games of that sort and was looking on at the proceedings with, I suppose, some degree of interest when the Queen, holding off an upcoming young contender, motioned would he like to play. When it became necessary eventually to communicate over some fine point in the house rules, the signora's son was sent for to assist with his English, which was excellent. Salvatore was a handsome thirty-two or -three, so tall he always seemed to lean a little; he had pink cheeks and a shock of wavy lustrous blue-black hair. In time the crowd of kibitzers had expanded greatly and included many adults. Need I tell you Mike emerged repeatedly the victor? Salvatore, who was a dear and vastly devoted to his mother—quite evidently the Queen Bee as well as of checkers—told my husband he could feel proud as first ever to defeat the Queen in an Aprica contest during her many seasons there. Truly, the son said, she was accustomed to pitting her prowess against the younger set and coming out ahead; now the Queen Bee

was feeling just a little miffed at the stinging defeat. She did, however come through in royal fashion with a congratulatory accolade to the victor, and from that time on we were nodded to pleasantly from neighboring tables as we sat in the dining room and sipped the lovely rosso or bianco with our polenta.

# # #

My first day at the Pensión F I started off with a bottle of mineral water as well, toting it back and forth to my room, using it also to brush my teeth. But I soon stopped being timid about drinking water from the tap, even in the villages of Spain. While this is contrary to general advice, I suffered no unduly dire effects. The one or two minor stomach upsets I did experience in the four-month period abroad might just as well have been triggered by quite respectable food, or change of "air" or altitude, or sundry other agents. The important thing is to make up your mind you're going to get a sampling and face it out with good grace and intestinal fortitude. It's all part of the experience and only rarely fatal. The big problem abroad, for the budget conscious, is to brave the waiter's scorn and request and then insist on getting the free stuff and not get out-maneuvered into paying for the bottled.

Sunday morning I looked up from my coffee and rolls wondering where the jolly "Scusey!" sounds were coming from and saw two longhaired youths, one with a comical straggly blond beard and wearing what seemed a girl's white blouse embroidered gaily down the front. He was bumping into tables clumsily and in a cheerful friendly manner scuseying his way around them. That was his one word of Spanish [!] he confided shortly, and

he managed with it fabulously all through Spain. But it wouldn't bring them tea in this particular corner of the country, it developed, which being British they urgently required. So I helped them order tea and then was of some small assist during the lengthy contretemps the blond lad was having with the maid, trying to make her understand he couldn't find the trousers drenched in last night's sudden downpour and hung in some now forgotten passage-way to dry. His wardrobe was evidently even less extensive than my own, for he now made do with his pajama pants and a blouse from North Africa contributed by an American girl he had recently met up with.

The boys were having a great and carefree time in Spain. There was a rather hectic tale of the previous night's occurrences not all of which I followed, but the general impression was of a real swinging on-going party somewhere in the suburbs of Barcelona to which, pantalones willing, they would shortly be returning.

At noon I headed eagerly for the cathedral steps to watch the sardana. Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia, another section of Spain that like the Basque provinces is stubbornly freedom loving and independent, inclined to manifest from time to time a militant desire for regional autonomy. Like the Basques, the Catalonians too are prosperous and business-shrewd. The sardana, inherent in the Catalan ambiente, their poet Maragall described as the dance of a people that goes forward hand in hand.

Right now however, nothing seemed about to go forward for some time past the scheduled hour. I took a quick turn meanwhile through the cathedral, a patchwork begun in the fourteenth and added to in various later centuries. I found it hard to grasp except in little pieces and given time. Within mostly massive, gloomy and depressing, an outside overview impossible to obtain. Certain old delightful corners I would later poke into and later find my way inside through certain beautiful old entryways. Its graceful Gothic cloisters are pleasantly shaded with palms, idyllic with duck pond and with fountains —pragmatic in addition—where people come to draw water. And as regards pragmatic: its confessional booths boldly annotated for use in various languages, such as I would also see in other lands, always struck for me somehow a jarring temporal note—for communication with the Lord, even through his spokesman, should transcend such man-made barriers. But I am being unreasonable; certainly it is a thoughtful gesture to visiting believers needing to relieve themselves of newly-contracted sin...a condition that might easily arise in Barcelona, lively sailor's target.

# # #

Eventually the crowd begins to gather in the plaza fronting the cathedral. The musicians of the cobla—the sardana band—are tuning up their instruments: they play the trumpet and trombone and for contrast the indigenous tenora and flaviol. The circles are forming then expanding as a newly arrived Catalan maiden swiftly changes into the rope-soled sandals many wear, laces them around her ankles and dumps her workaday shoes, her jacket and handbag onto the pile that's growing at the center of the ring. Additional circles—collas—keep making up and frequently age groups tend to dance together but sometimes they are mixed, as when I see a bony hawk-nosed agile little man who must be eighty, jaunty in his red-laced white canvas espadrilles and black beret, welcomed brightly into a circle of young ladies in their twenties. I circulate on the fringes as the collas multiply and, while my first impression is of jovial participants in a casual folk dance, I soon spot groups of especially serious young devotees of the sardana and settle down to watch one.

They dance in well-coordinated harmony, first one then another in the colla calling terse commands as the music swells and ebbs, joined hands are raised or lowered from the classic peaks and tapping steps are speeded up or slowed, lengthened or diminished. The solemn lilting up-down motion with its variations, the sweet precision of it! so exquisitely wedded to the throbbing of the band. Even as music and dance leap to climax, its dancers never lose their staid composure—and it is this characteristic that is said to typify the Catalan personality.

An intermission brings much visiting among the groups. A woman circulates with contribution can through all assembled, dancers and watchers. I ask, "¿Es para la musica?" to be sure it is neither religious nor governmental, then drop my coin. She tags me with a small yellow sticker which shows a stylized sardana dancer and says Divulgacio Musical. I understand this must be one of the musical societies that abound in Barcelona, where even the fish mongers at the market stalls are said to hawk their ware in perfect pitch.

Chapter Seven: GAUDÍ AND GAZPACHO

Late afternoon found me in one of the newer parts of town, headed back from a visit with Elsie and Sam Winston, my American friends of three years earlier. The day was still pleasant, the hour far too early for the evening meal at the pensión, not served till ten o'clock. I walked the several miles home as on a checkerboard, a few blocks gained in one direction, a turn to another as it seemed more promising.

These streets in the Ensanche, the expansion of the city that the nineteenth century brought, are square and regular, so that one is not easily confounded, as often happens in the beguiling maze of the old section.

Coming in time to the Paseo de Gracia, I turned down the elegant boulevard with its broad flower-bordered grassy mall, many of its old aristocratic mansions now converted to swank boutiques, banks and movie theaters.

And there was La Pedrera, imaginative creation of drippy balconies and fantastic chimneys, product of the inventive genius of the widely hailed and as widely castigated Antonio Gaudí. "Learn to play the violin," Gaudí advised the woman who complained she couldn't get her piano into the wedge-shaped room of another building of his design—or so the story goes. For him, you will have guessed, my hotel was named, situated as it is across from another Gaudí creation. Further along the Paseo I passed the block where stand three structures in a row that are the work of Barcelona's three top turn-of-the-century architects—foremost among them Gaudí—who set off the city's modernist renaissance. This is the famous "Apple of Discord," a sparkling pun in Spain, where manzana means both block and apple.

Eventually I reached the Plaza de Cataluña, that handsome and extensive square which, with the Ramblas at one end and Paseo de Gracia at the other, provides the link between old city and new. The heart of a hubbub of noisy activity that swirls about it, calmly and somewhat formal dwells this pleasant interlude of tranquil flower beds and fountains, solemn sculpture and the benches where for a small coin you sit and recuperate from your mad dash through on-coming traffic to attain it. To steady your shakes and with a kind of narcosis ready the spirit for the outward lunge, you watch the endless charade of children feeding pigeons while admiring parents angle cameras. Beneath the square important train and subway stations clamor and to one side or another virtually every bus of Barcelona at some time comes to rest..

Bordering it are stylish outdoor cafés and towering over it rears the skyscraper Telefónica. Many times as I later wandered through the Plaza de Cataluña making the transition from old to new, or strode across it seeking clues to the one proper bus, or drank in its soothing greenery from across the traffic with my aperitíf—I would be seeing re-enacted Orwell's account of when the anarchists held the vital telephone exchange and the barricades were mounted all along that stretch.

# # #

On the eve of my departure from the pensión, my stock there soared immeasurably. I was seated at the poison green table deep in a letter home and keeping tolerably warm with all three pieces of my suit topped off by the robe. A knock at the door. It was the Count advising me of callers. I looked my wonder and he added, "Son espanoles!" You could see this raised me a good-sized notch above the average tourist.

Actually, it was my American friend accompanied by a Spanish couple. She had brought my prospective tutor and the latter's husband to meet me. In discussing the possibilities the previous day, we had left it that Elsie would ask Señora Santillán to phone me if interested in taking on the task; we had not expected the contact could be made before another day or two.

In those cramped and dreary quarters I entertained my guests, offering the hospitality of the lone chair and lumpy bed after a hurried pass over the rumpled bedclothes. They were delightful people, the Santilláns, roughly of my age and political persuasion—about which one was rather guarded at first meeting and in such

surroundings. Of the two, she was the serious one: matriarchal, statuesque in bearing and dignified in speech. There was a measure of reserve I sensed in her—an innate formality I never quite got past. But he was something else again: a small man with an enormously engaging twinkle and warm readiness to accept me at face value.

It was soon agreed that for a modest fee I would come to their apartment at five o'clock each day for an hour's instruction in the Spanish language.

We were quickly on a first name basis, simplifying things no end. They were Julio and Dolores. And I loved the way they called me 'arriet.

# # #

Next morning I installed myself back at the Hotel Gaudí, where the living was so pleasant, the location so well-suited to me, and my comings and goings unremarked.

I was relieved not to have two heavy meals urged on me daily and the amount I spent on food in Barcelona was so modest that I probably did not exceed by more than fifty cents a day the all-inclusive rate at the dismal pensión. And this would include my few splurge meals.

Breakfast I would habitually take at a café just around the corner on the Ramblas, attracted by the sign that promised coffee and croissant, brioche or ensaimada for nine pesetas. My usual distaste for routines notwithstanding, I enjoyed returning there most mornings. The rhythm of regularity this gave my days in Barcelona was a comfort in strange surroundings, contributing also to the feel I sought of living in a Spanish city, not just visiting. That breakfast special, I soon learned, would run a little more at a table—a price differential encountered frequently abroad. The counter, or mostrador, held advantages other than economy. I was soon exchanging a few words with especially one of the waiters, a comfortable fortyish man who, as I walked through the door, would reach down a large cup from the overhead shelf and start tapping the hot water for my café americano from a side faucet of the business-like expresso machine. So seated I commanded in addition a fine view of the café's array of tapas, the snacks which added so much gustatorial pleasure to my Spanish stay.

These appeared in moderate portions, an accompaniment to aperitíf, brandy, wine, beer, soft drink or nothing at all.

The Spanish "cocktail hour" runs for hours before the evening meal and is by no means solely a middle- or upper-class institution. Nor is indulgence in tapas—and the accompanying snort of one sort or another—limited to the evening hours. Before the afternoon meal comes a pleasant interlude, or a late morning or afternoon pick-me-up has its uses too, why not?

Sometimes I'd stop back at my café to sample one of its intriguing tapas and occasionally a couple of the heartier selections would serve me for a major meal. Thus in time I gathered bits of knowledge on the subject, but nothing like the detailed run-down that would satisfy my curiosity and for the getting of which I lacked both nerve and tongue. Then, on my very last day in Barcelona when I had almost given up the hope, I was able to close the tapa information gap.

There were the wavy-tendril led squid and its near relation octopus in a variety of guises—calamares fritos or calamares plancha, chipirones, pulpos. There were sardines grilled and sardines pickled in a spicy fruit conserve, clams, anchovies and a fish named sepia. Mejillones which are mussels and caracoles which are snails. Cap i pota, the Catalan specialty which is jellied hog maws and trotters. Meatballs and codfish balls, pork sausage and tripe. Cubes of ham and cubes of cheese; cold asparagus, brussel sprouts and artichoke. Pinchitos moranos: bits of grillled meat on a skewer, a midget shishkebab. Olives and almonds, broad beans and four kinds of potato. There was empanada gallega, the succulent meat pastry of Galicia, rolled up and stuffed with sausage, mushrooms, cheese and other good makings. Above all appeared tortilla español, the typical and ever-present Spanish omelet, puffed wondrously high and fluffy with potatoes, served cold in wedges...related neither to the Mexican tortilla nor to the American conception of the Spanish omelet. All in all, forty-three varieties served at my café; and running from six pesetas at mostrador, eight at table, to thirty-five and forty for grilled shrimp.

# # #

My first day back at the Gaudí I stumbled on a great little bargain

eatery on the Calle Quintana—second turning left off Fernando approaching from the Ramblas—as sinister appearing a dark alley as it is elusive if you happen to be looking for it. In that unassuming little basement restaurant every meal of several I had was good. Dinner came in at either thirty or forty-five pesetas. I would order a large mixed salad at the outset and then the excellent paella or for variety the canalones, an Italian dish adopted by Catalonia: generous tubes of tender pasta stuffed with meat, smothered in a rich cream sauce and baked in its individual casserole until the top gets all bubbly, sizzling and crusty brown. The main course was far less interesting—but by that time who needed it? Perhaps a modest helping of fried fish, roast veal, liver, stewed chicken or pork chop, almost always accompanied by french fries. For dessert, at the higher price you could choose instead of fresh fruit their flan: the typical Spanish cup custard with caramel topping, cool and bland, freshening the palate and contributing just the right small touch of sweetness to meal's end. A decanter of wine, harsh but drinkable, cost seven pesetas, but if dining prior to class I would pass it up as too potent for the hour.

Even for Spain that meal was exceptionally cheap. However, at a modern luncheonette in an arcade of the Plaza Real—the lovely palm-filled square adjoining the Ramblas whose sidewalk cafés swarm today with an international assortment of blue-jeaned youngsters—I downed a goblet of champagne with my salad, paella and half a barbequed chicken, all on the sixty peseta special, still well short of a dollar.

The foremost of my Barcelona splurges was at an historic old establishment on Calle de Escudillers that ran heavily to the rugged charm of wooden beams and barrels. I found the food there very good...the problem was getting served.

That was the first time I encountered the query "¿Sola?" I would later hear so often, in other languages as well. The disgusted "¿Sola?" flung at a lone woman by a hostile waiter in a crowded restaurant is one variety; another constitutes the trademark of the eager beaver male encountered on train or bus or almost anywhere. In either event you listen with sinking heart, knowing it will be followed closely by some sort of an attempt to shaft you.

Between entering the restaurant and being seated, I was handed from one to the other of four waiters in as many rooms. Finally I had one cornered upstairs in dead-end position and after I had quavered in a teary, halting Spanish, "Maybe I go home now"—at that point I was seated at a table big enough for four.

Here I started off with my very favorite gazpacho, the Spanish borscht, which I would order gleefully whenever, searching diligently, I found it on the menu.

Primarily a southern dish, gazpacho is served elsewhere mainly in the summer. They say it has a thousand variations, but I have known it basically as a highly flavored blend of tomatoes, green peppers, cucumbers, onion, garlic, olive oil, vinegar, seasonings and water that leaves your insides tingling with the pungency of the August garden. Frequently the same vegetables come to table diced as garnish, often with hard-boiled egg and croutons. Usually soft bread gets blended into the mixture, the name in fact connoting soaked bread in Arabic. In the poorest variety, prepared in the field by the peasant as his daytime meal, gazpacho might contain no more than the bread combined with garlic, oil, vinegar and water. Sometimes eggs are included, sometimes almonds; it may be thick, thin or medium and eaten with spoon or drunk as beverage.

To follow mine that night I ordered the zarzuela de mariscos, typical of the area. It arrived an exquisite mixture of fish, shrimp, squid and mussels baked en casserole in a piquant red-brown sauce. "Zarzuela" means operetta; if you wish to go overboard and throw in half a lobster, the dish becomes an "opera."

Wine, expresso, tip and all, the dinner cost two dollars. I doubt that I ever exceeded that amount by much in Barcelona. Let me add hastily, however, that the city is noted for its excellent cuisine and has many fine and elegant restaurants where you can eat your way through an impressive number of pesetas—cannot in fact avoid doing so once you have entered. I chose to stretch my limited wherewithal over a three-month period and nonetheless ate—and drank—sufficiently well.

Chapter Eight: CHARLIE BROWN AND THE CATALAN QUESTION

Emerging from dinner well-satisfied onto the Calle de Escudillers, I found myself walking a colorful street, surrounded by the hectic night life of rough and tumble bars and cafés frequented by sailors and their girl friends and all manner of shady-looking denizens, but also by everyone else in Barcelona on occasion. I covered the short distance to the Ramblas, which at that lively intersection bears much the character of Escudillers and heading toward the port steadily drops its respectable middle-class features and tends toward dreary tattoo parlors and little shop windows gaudy with tasteless souvenirs to entice the seafarer.

Crossing the Ramblas, I entered through an arch the narrow street

called Arco del Teatro that leads into the heart of the Barrio Chino, once known as an extremely disreputable area. This aspect of the quarter is said to have vanished, yet one day when I was hopelessly turned around in its midst and asked my way back to the Ramblas, with only a short distance to be traversed in broad daylight the well-dressed Spaniard I inquired of strongly advised a taxi—which of course I didn't take.

Sure, there are musty dark alleys the sun never enters, murky corridors, crude cavern-like cafés. There are flop houses up the stairs and streetwalkers down the block, I suppose, on their beat, but I never felt in any danger there.

Providing an outer limit to the barrio runs El Paralelo, named for the 40 44' earth parallel which it follows. It too, they say, has paled in boisterous disrepute as an amusement center, but especially in the evening I found it stimulating to stroll—a street where children's carousels brush up against musical revue theaters and basement night clubs; where sidewalk cafés hum with mixed types in the incongruous shadow of three tall smokestacks that provide the stranger with a helpful landmark. On the Paralelo I once passed a theater showing Paddy Chayefsky's The Tenth Man, a play concerned with the old shtetl of Eastern European Jewry, and once again I was struck by the copious intellectual appetite of Barcelona and the paradoxes that abound in Spain.

Actually, my hotel itself lay a little way into the Barrio Chino. One day I was sitting in my room mulling over the vagaries of some highly irregular verbs, when I realized that for the past few minutes knocking at my consciousness had been that inflammatory flamenco beat. Leaving the imperfect preterite to cool its heels, I went in search of those other more enticing ones clicking and striking a pavement somewhere out there...onto my balcony that fronted porches and house facades festooned with laundry and overlooked rooftops paced slinkily by night-serenading cats. Off at the corner I could see the source, where a group of half a dozen teen-age boys stood whooping it up—hands clapping, feet thumping, trilling the distinctive high notes, smacking a guitar. On a neighboring balcony laden with drying underwear and sox a young woman emerged, a child cradled in her arms.

The boys were quite certainly Andalusian: flamenco is not a Catalan thing. But large numbers of immigrants from the South of Spain have flocked to this great industrial center and lively metropolis seeking jobs and a new life. They have fled the unemployment of the dying towns...or the agricultural peonage and lives of dead-end desperation of their fathers. From many parts of Spain, indeed, they have deluged Barcelona and resultantly the city has taken on melting pot aspects that have amended its Catalan ways. The Andalusians in particular tend to be relegated to the servant class and service industries and to residential slums. They are considered by many natives to inhabit a sub-culture of ignorance...sound familiar?

Homework interrupted by the flamenco, no longer content with the cloistered life of a pedant, I took to the streets. A couple of hours remained until class, time to work my way leisurely toward the Santillán home and in the process have a fresh look at the Ramblas. Among the flower stalls I went, pausing frequently to immerse

myself in the generous variety of their color, in the good garden smells the warming spring sun was beginning to coax from their splendor. Resistance shattered, I squandered fifteen pesetas on a bunch of violets for my collar.

I came to a halt at a kiosk displaying a number of exceedingly political paperbacks. This was a vast change from the book stalls remembered as of three years earlier and the other day when I first spotted Karl Marx on the Ramblas I was floored. Now I dug in my bag for my notebook to add a few new items. I wanted to discuss this change with Dolores, to try to understand.

On the Ramblas or in book shops I came upon several of the novels of Ramon Sender, anti-fascist Spanish writer now in exile. In Catalan I found Herbert Marcuse and various collections of Negro spirituals, as well as No et Pots Queixar, Charlie Brown—You Can't Complain, Charlie Brown, of Charles Schultz's Peanuts series.

Mi Vida Con Martin Luther King, by Coretta Scott King, I encountered everywhere in Spain, frequently publicized by poster. In Barcelona it appears in both Spanish and Catalan and Dr. King's writings too are popular.

What startled me most was finding George Orwell's Homenatge a Catalunya—Homage to Catalonia in Catalan; this I knew to be Orwell's account of his participation in the Spanish Civil War, fighting with POUM for the Loyalists. Obviously strongly anti-fascist, at the same time it exposes the machinations of the Communists and Russia's oppressive role, and I wondered whether the censors felt its reading might promote a little political in-fighting in the present day...or foster a "plague on both your houses" attitude...or point the moral, "How lucky we are to have got Franco instead!" (And all opposition in Spain today, of any leftist complexion, is immediately labeled Communist.)

Barcelona held far and away the broadest, most intriguing selection of books I found displayed popularly—but in Valencia I was to note Shalom Aleichem's Dos Antisemitas y Otras Narraciones.

Then in Mérida in Estremadura, a remote section of the country where you might least expect it, behind the undistinguished book counter at the railroad station I found in paperback Noam Chomsky's La Responsibilidad de los Intelectuales. Imagine, if you can, discovering it in the sleepy station of a small western cattle town in Chomsky's own United States! I came upon only one other bookseller in Mérida, and in that shop's tiny window Coretta King's book was prominently featured.

# # #

Barcelona is Spain's publishing center, handling virtually all of that industry, and not surprisingly its cultural center also. Many books are now appearing in the Catalan language, which has had a great and continuing revival. So much so that in the past several years the Franco regime has had to back off drastically from earlier efforts to suppress the regional trend, its language and its culture. Banned were Catalan books, periodicals, theater, song and dance, teaching of Catalan in the schools and practically its very utterance in public. A similar suppression had been foisted on the people during the six-year rule of the "benign" dictator Primo de Rivera, when it had likewise given rise to an intensified regionalism and use of the language. Then with the coming of the short-lived Second Republic, Catalonia regained its cultural freedom and won as well a long-sought regional autonomy, and its people no longer flaunted the Catalan spitefully and refused to speak Spanish.

Evidently it took Franco many years to realize how these things work. With Catalonians again stripped of their beloved heritage, they must have made things so hot for Franco that, in regard at least to cultural rights, he beat an eventual modified retreat. With two such experiences in the background, this time it may take that pendulum a long while to swing back. Right now Catalan fever, I would guess, is running well above normal. I found my American friends quite put out that meetings they attended on occasion were now being conducted in Catalan—having finally mastered Spanish, again they were unable to follow the proceedings. They must have felt much like the rejected well-meaning white in the U.S. trying desperately to join hands with blacks when the strongly separatist mood was upon them.

Surprised one day to hear Dolores refer scoffingly to the Madrileño's speech, I remarked that I had assumed Castilian stemmed from the Madrid area, where what got spoken must surely be the model for the country.

"The pure Castilian has been bastardized in Madrid, it's not so pure," she replied. "Much as in Barcelona, there has been a great deal of migration from the South and West and the language has suffered." Then she

tossed her dark head a bit proudly and continued, "personally, I believe the whole Castilian language, pure or otherwise, is hardly the greatest! Catalan is far more sonorous...and more effective a tool."

As Dolores explained it to me, there are essentially two prongs to the Catalan situation today: A romance language similar to the almost vanished Provençal of southern France, it is the ancient dialect of the area and thus spoken in outlying towns and villages by the country folk, at times to the exclusion of Castilian; coming to live in the big city, they continue its use. At the same time it is enjoying a current popularity with the Barcelona intelligentsia and upper classes, so that many who never spoke it in the past now study Catalan and make a point of employing it in social discourse. (I had heard Dolores use it on the phone to a friend the previous day.) Today Barcelona's children grow up speaking it. Book shop windows feature Catalan grammars, Catalan-Spanish dictionaries and "how-to" books to simplify the learning of the quite complicated language.

I was amused and delighted by the comment on Catalonia uncovered in the travel guide of Iberia, "the Spanish National Airlines," as it labels itself, which presumably speaks with fairly official tongue:

"Traditionally a separatist province, she has her own language, Catalan, and her people speak it to a man despite stern warnings from the capital; after the Civil War, things were hard here for awhile, the tongue was forbidden in schools, and virtually nothing was published in the language. Barcelona loves to read...and while Spanish is spoken as a second tongue, she felt rightly indignant during the l940s. Now, at least, she can read James Bond in Catalan...." Also George Orwell, it neglects to say.

That "her people speak it (Catalan) to a man" and that "Spanish is spoken as a second tongue" would seem from my limited observation to be going overboard a little: only one of Barcelona's several newspapers appears in Catalan, magazines and the bulk of book publishing seem to be in Spanish and I heard much Spanish spoken in the street. Still, it is good to see them gorge on crow over at Spain's official airline.

# # #

On the Ramblas that afternoon of the flamenco and the violets, I stopped at a news stand and picked up a copy of the Herald Tribune, the American paper published in Paris for circulation throughout Europe but, in my experience, not readily available off-season except in major cities and even there not predictably. In Spain it is often censored off the street. I would buy one every few days while in Barcelona and occasionally also a local paper to skim off the headlines and labor through a few of the easier items.

The news stand carried papers from several countries, but its selection from France was really extensive. An estimated half of Barcelona's people speak French and there is a strong feeling of kinship with that country. There must be many factors. Geographically, Barcelona is very close to France: two hours by train to the border as contrasted with twelve hours to Madrid. The area has more than once in history been part of France. A hunk of southern France is still today considered Catalan—as it is Basque further to the west—and speaks the language; a very noticeable overlap of ambiance straddles the border. In the Middle Ages Catalonia was inundated by Provençal knights eager to rout the heathen Moor, perhaps accounting for the similarity of languages. Politically and intellectually the people of Barcelona must look to France for stimulus, for a breath of fresh air...because the atmosphere in present-day Spain is stultifying. Thus large numbers read the French press and books and those who can afford the luxury make an occasional week-end trip across the border to take in a movie or cultural event. This identification with France and things French contributes much to the sophistication, the cosmopolitan aura Barcelona wears so handsomely, though its importance as a Mediterranean and world port must also be an influence. Barcelonans, it is frequently said, identify more with the rest of Europe than with Spain, and often theirs is counted as the only truly European city in the land.

Chapter Nine: THE CATALAN METTLE

The Santilláns lived in an old working class quarter. To walk its streets took a bold determination, such as a worker does well to possess, or, alternatively perhaps, a deep-seated recklessness. So circumscribed were its pavements that if two people were to pass, he who lost the out-fumble must descend into the path of a hustle of traffic also confined to narrow limits, with the going precarious, the outcome anybody's guess.

Arriving at the proper street and number I was still not there. Then began the climb. Somehow, in Spain, you have put in a good two flights before the legend on the wall acknowledges attainment of the first floor. And somehow everyone you know lives on the third at a minimum; with the Santilláns it was the fourth. Thus, completely winded I would achieve the door of handsome satiny carved wood found so often and unexpectedly in Barcelona, raise the knocker of gleaming brass and, welcomed warmly yet with style by the Señora, find myself, heart pounding, breath lacking, unable to respond spontaneously in the graceful phrases I had carefully constructed while enroute. Nothing but a vulgar American Whew! issued forth as I plopped unceremoniously into a nearby chair.

I had expected an hour's tutoring daily, but my visits always ran to more than two and sometimes as long as three. The first portion generally went in fairly formal instruction, yet often interrupted by more personal talk and the countless questions I would ask that she would answer patiently—this too in Spanish, for Dolores spoke no English. Then, as the hour moved past and I demurred at the time she was giving beyond our agreement, she would insist we were no longer teacher and student, but two friends visiting together. Still seated side by side at the great mahogany desk that dominated the tile-floored parlor, we would talk on about a multitude of things. Mostly, that is, she would talk—in that throaty cultivated voice, her tightly coroneted head accenting her remarks—and I would break in to say that I was lost. Then we'd go over the same ground slowly. Or, with copious hesitations and inventions, I would tell about my day and she would recast the tale into more acceptable syntax. From Dolores I learned the little I came to know about what was happening around us—and a little too about what once had been.

She talked about Barcelona when the bombs were plummeting from fascist bombers into the smoking harbor and of the factional politics of those times, and then she'd get carried away and reminisce too fast in language that I wasn't ready for and I would miss much of what she said. From her I got a glimmer of prevailing Spanish politics; of the increased influence in government of the Opus Dei—the Catholic lay association—of technocrats and businessmen and of the Church; of the fall from grace of the old line Falange. (Although El Movimiento, the Falangist organization, still maintained a daily press I found in various cities—the issue I once bought devoted largely to speeches of officialdom still lauding the memory of their martyred hero, their bully-boy, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the earlier dictator and having as namesake many a Spanish city's leading thoroughfare. And still operated the machinery of the syndicates, the so-called union structure. In the smaller towns I found its headquarters, well plastered with the yoke and arrows, prominent upon the scene. Certainly the Falangists had still to exert much local influence, control much patronage.)

I told Dolores of my wonder at finding all those books so openly displayed along the Ramblas. Was there no longer censorship? I asked.

"No censorship...?" she echoed in amusement, and here I paraphrase a little for I had to tussle with her phraseology, though perhaps I can convey the tone. "To one who views the book stalls after some years' absence, undoubtedly literary censorship is seen to have lessened. Certain small advances have been wrested from the State. You can now buy Marx out on the street, and Trotsky and Sorel—but their works date back in time and do not speak of Spain. And granted, even more recent writers of a radical persuasion. But Sender's

novels, proletarian though they be and Spanish, are not concerned with Spain today—he lives in exile. Even Orwell's book, whose appearance seems to jolt you so, deals with the Spain of thirty years ago."

She pulled her chair in closer, bristling with earnestness now. “Did you see anywhere in print, however—anywhere at all—a criticism of the Generalisimo? His policies debated, his practices denounced?" She tapped the desk decisively with each new point. "Did you see condemnation of the Spanish State?...Opposition to the granting of American military bases?...No," she concluded, sitting back confident in the knowledge her polemic could not be disputed. "Of course you didn't."

Later I learned that James Michener's basically non-political Iberia —which I found so stimulating of the urge to drop all other things and fly at once to Spain—is banned there, presumably because of its quite incidental criticisms of Franco.

I said further to Dolores that I wondered the regime did not fear the effect on its own students of news of the revolutionary doings of youth immediately across the border.

"Oh but they do," she replied. "Certainly they fear the winds of freedom. Among the French newspapers you saw no longer appears a particular Parisian paper—it was removed a year ago because it was too liberal." I have forgotten which, although she named it.

"A great show has been made of relaxing press censorship, yet in the final analysis what does the new Ley de Prensa—the press law—say? It talks about permitting editors to exercise self-censorship, yet leaves the government full power to decide what shall see the light of day. The only limitations on freedom of expression, it declares with tongue in cheek, will be imposed for such reasons as maintenance of the existing institutions...for the security of the State. Before the newspaper reaches the street ten copies must be deposited with the government, which has the power to ban or seize the edition...also true of books. Some freedom of expression, verdad? Some double-talk!"

"And what of meetings? " I asked. "How free are they?"

"Of that you be the judge. In our country, each time twenty people come together permission must be sought, the text of all remarks submitted in advance. That takes care of our freedom of assemblage.

"Even as regards those books that appear quite openly in the stalls and shops," she continued, thoroughly involved by now with her subject, "let

me tell you of an incident: A friend of mine was only recently arrested after being turned in by a neighbor as a 'Communist.' (And that, you may imagine, is what they label anyone who disagrees with the regime.) Do you know on what evidence he was convicted?"

The question was rhetorical, but she paused a few moments to let it sink in and I shook my head slightly to show I had caught up.

"The police discovered in his house several of the volumes you have noticed on the Ramblas. As you would expect, my friend objected he had bought them all openly where they were publically for sale, and how could that be called illegal! Their response? That anyone who would want to buy several of that type of book must obviously be a Communist and enemy of the State. This is the logic of the liberalization of censorship we have in Spain today."

I was still following as she shook her dark head firmly and summed it up. "Things have not changed that much...not basically....The pseudo- liberalization rhetoric still cloaks an iron fist."

# # #

If not for my contact with the Santilláns I would have known nothing of the wave of strikes then current in Spain, although Barcelona itself was a hard-hit center. Dolores and I were about to conclude our session one evening when Julio arrived. Pulling a copy of the Tele/expres from his pocket, he laid it open to an inside page and pointed to a modest item.

"They've shut down another plant today....It isn't over yet," he said.

The strike was still spreading in textiles, Catalonia's major industry, descended from the handicraft guilds of the Middle Ages. Textiles contribute significantly to Spain's national income; in Catalonia they are pivotal. And in those early days of the Civil War when Franco's insurrection appeared to be triggering social revolution as freedom's sole defense, Barcelona's textile mills were in the forefront of the industrial collectives set up and

operated by the workers with success. Some of those very workers, or their sons, were likely in the present leadership. Now Barcelona and neighboring Tarrasa—where a large Telefunken electric plant was also out—and Sabadell, Mataro and Bajo Llobregat, among other mill towns, were increasingly being shut down hard.

Seville too was rife with strikes...in steel and construction and bread baking, that I knew of. There were mines closed down in Asturias—you can count on the Asturian miners when a spirit of militancy wafts its way northwest on the Spanish breeze. And other situations were still erupting in the country as labor contracts came up for renewal amid a spiraling cost of living and the workers refused to be duped by the meager terms the stooge syndicate was inclined to settle for with the boss. So they downed tools—illegal of course and requiring great courage.

What was to become the longest post-war strike in Andalusia was then in progress in Seville. In February, steel workers had turned out in solidarity when several militant workers were fired (though only later, in France, did I learn these details). When the Guardia Civil chased the strikers from the environs of the plant, they obliged by moving off with great deliberation, at a crawl, in a caravan of cars and motorcycles that tied up the Málaga-Seville highway for hours. When the plant advertised for new workers, a group of strikers managed to confront the scabs and advise them they were dishonorable traitors; so the strikers were arrested, but only a few scabs stayed on to be delivered to work by heavily guarded bus.

On the way home from the Santilláns that night, all stirred up I stopped at my café for a cup of coffee, but primarily there to write and on the Ramblas mail a hasty note to my husband. I had been told that the mail of Americans was not likely to be censored, yet in general was cautious, especially on an open card. In cryptic code I let him know: "Barcelona is interesting now with many UFWOC-type happenings that Sol S. might be involved in, as might Jimmy J. re: Seville." I knew he would understand, since UFWOC—the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee—had a strike going in the California grape fields, and the good friends I had named were union officials in textile and steel at home

Afterward I tried to follow the strikes in the local press myself, searching the inside pages for mention of "conflicto laboral," or "paro"; not once did I see the word "huelga," which I would have recognized myself as "strike." Then later at class Dolores would analyze what was probably happening; she said one learned to read between the lines.

Seated at the Santillán's mahogany desk one day, I was attracted to some English print among a stack of papers: I knew that Julio read a little English. It was the newspaper of the British Labour Party, which manages to circulate underground in Spain, and it contained a prominent story on the grape strike and boycott. (How at home I felt!) Dolores and her friends, she told me, thought highly of the British and Scandinavian labor and socialist movements, looked toward them as models. (Returned to Philadelphia, I learned that UFWOC had received a contribution of pesetas in the mail from Spain at just about that time.)

# # #

San José's Day is an important holiday, with similarities to our Father's Day only recently created or at least encouraged, I suspect, by the merchant class. Some time in advance you could see it coming in advertisements and shop windows: be nice to old dad and the usual assortment of overpriced shirts, ties, smoking jackets and pipes.

There would be no class this San José's Day and, in need of change, I decided on a day-long outing. Early that morning I asked the desk clerk how to get to Montserrat by train. Running true to form for the profession, he suggested a bus tour which he could happily arrange for me and which I knew would net him some small commission. Usually I resist, but this sounded like a fair enough deal and I let myself be persuaded. As it turned out, I got my five bucks worth

Montserrat, the fantastic serrated mountain, lies some forty miles outside Barcelona. It is famous for its Benedictine monastery, the Black Virgin worshipped there, a world-renowned Boy's Choir, literary association with the Holy Grail and various other attributes come by through the years. One of these, I was interested to hear in the guide's commentary, was the monastery's use by the Republicans during the Civil War as a hospital for wounded soldiers; what I found most noteworthy in this connection was for a Spanish guide to go out of his way to mention it at all and in so fearlessly open a manner. Montserrat serves as a spiritual symbol for Catalonia, whose faith and tradition it is said to safeguard, and consequently many couples come here to be married. Some say it was this mountain that provided Gaudí with inspiration for his La Sagrada Familia.

And what a sight it was as we approached! Towering and jagged, sculpted and chiseled, obscene and toothsome. Looking, in fact—I could not help but think, plebeian me—most like a set of lowers commissioned for a god, which in a gross and cataclysmic gaffe in some celestial dental laboratory emerged composed entirely of canines!—and so got tossed out heaven's window to land points up in Catalunya.

Circling the rugged curves the bus went laboring to achieve the monastery stationed midway up the mountain. Then far off to the north, taking my breath at the first unexpected glimpse as we rounded a bend, the snow-crowned Pyrenees leaped and sparkled in the sun.

Arriving, out we piled, then through the central plaza trooped in close formation, past women from the countryside selling homemade cheese, on through dim passageways cut into stone that framed majestic vistas when you swung around to look. Led by our excellent guide we examined ancient and treasured works of art, took what he gave so knowledgeably regarding the site's architecture, history and religion. Between musty old stone walls hung with ex votos we marched, with little time to linger over the folk art's grateful testimony to miracles there accomplished.

Slowly we ascended in a patient queue to a tiny chamber misted over with candle smoke to pay respect to La Moreneta, a graceful Romanesque polychrome carving. There she sat holding court, the slight and very dark Virgin of Montserrat, equally dark manchild in her lap. The patron saint of Catalonia, more often than not she was greeted with a reverent kiss by callers.

As with anything that old, stories vary on her origin. One legend says Moors discovered her in a nearby grotto, causing the monastery to be built—but the monastery is said to date back to the eleventh century and La Moreneta to the twelfth. Another version has shepherds happening on her as far back as the ninth century, where she was hidden from the Moors. The Church insists she was carved by St. Luke—like the Virgin of Guadalupe in far-off Estremadura, also dark. And one hard-bitten source debunks the rest and claims she has turned black from all those years of candle smoke. Discovered by the Moors or hidden from them...and all the other variations that accrue with speculations through the centuries...quién sabe? I would be seeing similar statues of Virgins dusky, dark or black in various other places—including distant Austria—and wonder how each had come by her coloring, in whose image she was made and how or if they all related to each other. I remembered the dark Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico, where I had supposed she was fashioned after her dusky worshippers; but could she not stem from some earlier model and time...brought from Spain by the conquistadors, who came from Estremadura—descended from the swarthy Moors, yet taken to the bosom of a dark-complected people?

The Boy's Choir sang in an effect as sweet-toned as is promised and later, in a sun-drenched dining room of easy elegance, we were given a very fine meal with which we enjoyed a little vino tinto.

Before leaving Montserrat there was time to climb the perpendicular mountainside in a funicular, to linger at the top and lose oneself in such majestic views. Far below nestled the monastery and in the distance, fading out perhaps in France, marched ranks of my traumatic Pyrenees.

On the trip toward Montserrat I had been aware mainly of Americans who boarded at various hotel stops, of the young woman who talked about dollars as real money as opposed to pesetas; and even that was an interesting experience, for I had been with so few of my countrymen in recent weeks.

But the bus ride home is a memory etched deep in delight. Seated toward the front was a group of nine, ten Spaniards visiting Barcelona from Bilbao; and as we began unwinding down the mountain they began to make their memorable music—yes Basque, they said when I queried the couple across the aisle. And their melodies rang merry, then the melodies grew pensive, then our guide insisted that their leader take his special seat and microphone up front and himself joined in the chorus and it wasn't long before the driver's baritone too was ringing with the rest. Then it all got lustier and the song swelled louder and the conviviality caught fire throughout the bus.

In time we stopped at a roadside inn where the management preferred that you buy a bottle of the Montserrat liqueur the Benedectine monks produce. But regardless—on the house ranged thirty-two barrels of assorted wines and liquors we were urged to tap and taste. I could hardly be expected to cart a bottle over Europe with me, but was fair game for whatever contents of the barrels I could take sloshing about inside. Sadly, that sampling figure came to barely twelve before I was so sloshing full of sherries, brandy and Estomacal my capacity gave out.

During the remainder of the trip the Basques and all of us were far less animated, communing each with his saturated innards, dozing in contentment through the industrial valley of the Rio Llobregat.

I could not then anticipate the role that Basques would shortly play in Spain and how Montserrat itself would figure in it....

I had been absent from the country barely half a year when, in November l970, it erupted in anti-fascist protest. At Burgos sixteen Basques were undergoing court-martial, stunning the country with their courageous defiance. All of Spain demonstrated in support, in opposition to the military trial of civilians. Facing the greatest threat since his regime's inception, Franco cracked down ruthlessly, abolishing what scant civil liberties existed, making tens of thousands of arrests. And the demonstrations only grew, and grew more generally anti-Franco. At their center was the action held at Montserrat one weekend mid-December, when some three hundred Catalonian intellectuals and figures of some prominence—writers, teachers, entertainers, artists, among them Joan Miro—converged on the monastery in a forty-eight hour sit-in. They came to form a permanent committee to coordinate their protests, said a news source. Repeatedly Montserrat's abbot resisted governmental effort to persuade him to evict the demonstrators. When an exasperated official blustered on the telephone that the meeting was "a provocation!" the abbot replied, it is reported, "So was the Burgos court-martial...."

For such is the Catalan mettle, such is the Basque.

# # #

Semana Santa came to Barcelona. I had looked forward to spending Easter Week in Spain, experiencing its colorful rites and celebrations. Now I was feeling guilty for my interest in front of Dolores, a Quaker, to whom these things were relics of the Dark Ages, superstitious manifestations that kept the people docile under Franco's tyranny. I tried to explain to her (and to myself) that, though in agreement intellectually, I wanted nonetheless to steep myself in as many aspects of her country as I could and generally took delight in things folkloric; I was, after all, an American tourist of sorts and she must forgive this in me.

For a week before Palm Sunday, signs of it filled the corners near the Ramblas, little stands and carts selling palm in many shapes and guises— spears or hunks, fluted or woven, entwined with tinsel, decked with ribbon, hung with beads. Passing down Calle Fernando I would see children tugging at their mothers' skirts to guide them away from lingerie displays to the palm stand down the street.

Bowing to my persistence, Dolores suggested seeing the celebration and festivities at the Plaza de la Sagrada Familia.

The plaza adjoins Gaudí's Church of the Sacred Family, controversial symbol of the city. From many points in Barcelona you look upon its four tall towers where they poke the skyline like undulating arthritic fingers. Unfinished when its creator was run down by an auto and killed in l926, the church still is being built amid a clutter of construction paraphernalia. In view of the scarcity both of funds and of architectural plans left by Gaudí, who worked inspired but erratic, much of public opinion believes it should be left as is, preserved as a gigantic stone altar-piece. Others see it as a breach of faith if left unfinished. And the argument proceeds, more vigorous than the construction.

Gaudí's plans called for an enormous "cathedral of the poor" with three facades—Birth, Passion and Glory—each flanked by four huge towers, together symbolizing the twelve apostles. Only the Birth facade is completed, with its four major towers and several minor ones, all bizarre; it drips symbolically with the flora and fauna of the earth. True to both his concept that art should mirror nature and his interest in the humble, Gaudí used as Joseph's model a local carpenter and for the little burro a creature from the streets nearby.

This Sunday at noon the plaza was beginning to fill with family groups attired in their best. The children, even to babes in arms, brandished variously decorated palms, waving them so energetically as to court calamity. Those of an age circulated—admiring, comparing and coveting; if consequently too unhappy, off they would go to proposition an indulgent papa and lure him to the booths that ringed the square where additional plastic baubles might still be had. If lucky a lad might moreover emerge from the transaction with a bright balloon sailing from his other fist. The square was riotous with color.

I joined the gay paseo, wondering if this were to be the sum of it, for I had no idea what to expect. Dolores had responded, when I'd asked about the hour, "Oh, be there about noon," but I knew that even in vigorous Barcelona, Spanish time could be permissive.

There were in time, however, signs of movement. Thousands must have arrived already, the number steadily increasing. I edged my way as close to the focal point as inoffensively I could, pausing at frequent intervals to indulge in a snapshot.

Now I saw that confronting the crowd stood a wooden platform profusely decorated in red and white. There a microphone was being tested by a tall spare man in priestly robes, while sharing the space four teen-age boys stood tuning their guitars. If there was hymn singing coming up, thought I, it was to be of an unconventional stripe—guitars replacing organ.

Hymns or whatever, increasingly I was impatient for the start. Needing diversion, I worked my way back in the plaza to photograph an especially appealing little tot riding her father's shoulder.

Thus I was standing directly beneath a loud speaker anchored in the branches when the greeting hit me, bold and clear.

"Shalom Aleichem!" I was being hailed. I could swear I heard the crowd in Spanish—or was it Catalan?—singing the Israeli folk song, Shalom

Aleichem!...

Then in swift succession came a Spanish Red River Valley, cementing relations with my own land, and—oh I could swear again but surely must be going mad—Cumbaya! I knew the song: "Someone's cryin' Lord, Cumbaya, Oh Lo-ord, Cumbaya!"

My blood was leaping in excitement, straining the bounds of tingling skin....This was Catalonia, yes, but also Franco Spain where stood this youngish priest who, prior to blessing their palms, led his flock in such off-beat demonstrations of international good will. Here was a spiritual that hinted strongly at a people's longing to be free. Just so had the Negro slave voiced it in subtlety in the fields and passed it on to his descendents to chant in city streets in sharper mood, arms linked in solidarity...Cumbaya....

Such churning thoughts were cut across as with a sharp machete by the notes that rang out next...the tune I knew so well, the Spanish words familiar from grape boycott picket lines: Nosotros Venceremos!...it thundered down upon me from the treetops. We shall overcome!...it echoed from the Barcelona skies. The very symbol of the American Negro's fight for freedom....We are not afraid today!...the very thrust.

I was almost overcome myself, right then and there.

I looked about me, desperate in my exhilaration: where was someone I could talk to? Someone to share the evanescent moment with! Given my so meager Spanish, how could I communicate my wonder in the crowd? And with their meager freedom of expression, had they understood me, what could they tell me, standing together on that Spanish street? I looked about me, every fiber quickened, and I knew the frustration of traveling alone.

Chapter Ten: PICASSO IN BARCELONA

On the Paseo de Gracia that evening, I passed a movie house where Bunuel's La Joven was showing. Spur of the moment I stopped in to see it, attracted, for Luis Bunuel is yet another of Spain's men of genius who fled Franco's rule and still remain in exile. The story is of a young girl—poor white trash—on some remote island in the southern swamplands of the U.S. who, at first hating and hateful, comes to know and understand and at length befriend a young Negro unjustly accused and fleeing the law. Film's end brought animated chatter and hearty applause from the audience, surprising me because one almost never hears applause at American movie theaters and this particular topic seemed so unrelated to these people's lives.

Another night I saw El Otro Arbol de Guernica. Many maudlin scenes unfold the story of a brother and sister who, with their peers, are early in the Civil War evacuated from their home in Guernica to a school in France. El otro arbol is apparently the tree on the school grounds in whose shade the two meet frequently to comfort one another and share the mail from home. Understandably, they are homesick and eagerly anticipate letters from their parents, whom we are subsequently shown pen in hand at the kitchen table while bombs are crashing all about. We see the devastation in the bombers' wake, but providentially mother and father both are spared. And we never are told that these are Hitler's planes engulfing Guernica in flame at Franco's bidding. Things turn out pretty rosy after all when a couple of years later the schoolmaster comes dashing delightedly into the classroom brandishing a newspaper with a screaming headline: El Caudillo Francisco Franco has vanquished the Red Hordes! The kids go wild with joy! On the heels of the Leader's victory they're loaded back onto the busses and—earnest faces tilted with anticipation toward the brave new future that awaits them—go riding along the photogenic Bay of Biscay into the sunset, home to Guernica.

One is left to assume—as far as I could figure, and I couldn't be that wrong—that since Franco is the goody in all this, the baddies who dropped the bombs on Guernica are those he vanquished, the Red Hordes, read Loyalists, or as they say in Spain, Republicans.

How this audience contrasted with La Joven's! The film drew to its nauseatingly hearts and flowers end in total penetrating quiet. In utter silence the watchers left their seats and filed along the aisle. Not a word. I milled about the lobby listening, unsuccessful, for some comment. Soundless they filed into the street. No one had applauded the conquering hero or the lying screen.

# # #

I must try hard not to generalize. Or to dredge up leviathan conclusions from the minnow puddles of my limited experience. As you certainly must know by now, I brought to Spain some rather preconceived attitudes; strict objectivity would be difficult—I shall not feign it. Rather, I would tell what I saw and heard and think I learned, but also—such is the nature of this beast—some of what I felt.

Let me then say that throughout my stay, nudging at my consciousness was the feeling that Spain today is functioning at different levels.

The whole subject of Guernica, for instance, and of the Spaniard Picasso who has been in voluntary exile since the Loyalist defeat in l939.

Three years ago when Mike and I were driving toward that town—having located it only with difficulty on a map and, at that, a large one of Europe obtained in France, so silent on Guernica was official Spain—somewhere in its vicinity we picked up two attractive girls of twenty years or so, bound for a nearby village. Haltingly we told them we were interested in seeing Guernica, familiar to us through Picasso's mural...were they acquainted with the famous painting? Yes, responded the more outgoing of the two, she had seen it in a

magazine. We wondered at her answer: was it in a French or an illegal journal...or had she said that just to please?

Days afterward we are in Madrid. Passing the window of a leather shop a few doors from our hotel, we are astonished to glimpse on its wall a reproduction of the masterpiece! I enter the shop at once, feigning interest in a rack of suede coats. Approached by the smart young saleswoman, I look up at the Picasso and in my pidgin Spanish say something fairly stupid about liking the picture, being pleased to see it there. The response is blank. Emerging from our hotel the following day, we practically trip over the heavy cords trailing from giant rolling cameras, kleig lights and all such paraphernalia trained in the direction of the leather shop. A crowd is gathering to watch. Our hearts begin to pound! Will the courageous indiscretion of the shop owner lead to her imprisonment following a television expose? At a table on the sidewalk adjoining we order finos and settle in to observe events. She will at least have our moral support. The well-groomed woman of yesterday's suede coats appears from within and stations herself firmly in the doorway, arms crossed against her breast. Our hearts go out to her. Will she protest this invasion? She turns to watch, as we now see everyone is doing, the doorway that abuts her shop. Through it emerge a nattily dressed, heavily made-up couple, arm in arm. They walk directly toward the camera until a sweating man with a drooping mustache calls out authoritatively from the sidelines, "Corte!" They were on the third re-take when we finished up the second round of sherries and went on about our business. We had witnessed a similar scene on the Champs Elysees just two weeks earlier...they always get a big crowd shooting movies in the street.

Well, all that was three years earlier. Now I am walking along the Calle Petritxol in the Barrio Gótico under wrought iron balconies dripping greenery, past neat little shops self-consciously arty...and there it is again! Displayed along with other high quality picture postcards is Picasso's Guernica. I buy a couple. They are produced in the Netherlands, the small print says. A bit of desultory chit-chat and the good woman behind the counter is quite matter of fact in winding up the sale.

Again I am shaken! I continue on through the little Plaza del Pino, then to the central Plaza Nueva, pondering the while, for another look at the versatile Picasso's sgraffitos on the College of Architects facade. Portraying Barcelona's various feasts, these young-in-heart stick figures dominate that portion of the square, but with a delicate touch, fun counterpoint to the heavy dignity of the cathedral across the way.

I may as well make one big Picasso day of it, so, musing still, I am headed eagerly toward the Picasso Museum after a three-year absence.

With all this pondering, attempting to steer clear of full-fledged conclusions I am moved at least to an opinion: that a gigantic whitewash is taking place of the Guernica massacre of l937, the perpetrator attempting metamorphosis into innocent victim. But why be surprised? History has been rewritten before. And who would not be happy to claim the genius Picasso?—as he now is characterized in a local guide book. Especially Spain, I would think, in view of the paucity of artistic genius that finds expression there today in so discouraging an intellectual milieu. Once it was dangerous in Franco Spain even to speak of the poet Garcia Lorca, but in time his murderers absolved themselves of guilt and claimed him for their own. Something quite similar is evidently taking place today regarding the painter Pablo Picasso. Lorca was unable to set the record straight from a crude mass grave on the outskirts of Granada. Not so Picasso.

The previous year, I later learned, the Madrid government had negotiated for the Guernica mural itself, presumably for the Prado, but Picasso turned them down. It would be returned to Spain, he said, (from New York's Museum of Modern Art, where it has been on loan since l939) when civil liberties had been restored.

Barcelona, avoiding any political embarrassment for the artist, was being far more successful in its dealings with him. Although born in Málaga, he spent most of his early life in Barcelona and was said to have a great affection for the city. As who, having known it, would not!

# # #

This lasting attachment prompted his recent unexpected gift to the Picasso museum of nine hundred of his early works. Stored for fifty years in a Paseo de Gracia apartment, they were seen only by art historians with special permission. Paintings, drawings, engravings—nine hundred unknown Picassos! contributed in memory of his close friend and sometime secretary Jaime Sabartes, who died in l968. The Barcelona lawyer who played Boswell to his Samuel Johnson was the guiding spirit in the museum's creation back in l963, mainly with works given him by Picasso and with the artist's encouragement. It is said to be the only museum in the world devoted

completely to Picasso's art. Three years earlier I had judged it not terribly impressive, the collection not extensive. But with this addition?

When the Picasso family lawyer was called to the painter's home in southern France regarding arrangements for the gift, he found him reminiscing through photograph albums of his Barcelona years. And many such photos and documentations of Picasso's life in Spain are displayed in the museum.

I had heard from the Winstons about the windfall, and how a great excitement had swept the city. Newspapers were clamoring for the museum to speed up the vast expansion required to accommodate the new collection. I understood that some small part of it already hung.

The museum is housed in a palace whose courtyard is the epitome of romantic old Spain, perhaps Barcelona's most beautiful with its graceful staircases and colonnaded galleries. Walking toward it along the Calle de Moncada, I glimpsed other unexpectedly magnificent courtyards, some dating from the thirteenth century, behind misleading battered gates. Here a few gargoyles and there the delicate wood tracery around a window provide the clue. These were the mansions once of Barcelona's wealthiest merchants and aristocracy, robber barons of the Middle Ages.

The whole area is interesting. Moncada lies not far from the docks and sailors' quarter of Barceloneta. Around the corner is the church of Santa Maria del Mar, undergoing repairs at the time and appearing forlorn, but an example of pure Gothic style, the brilliant rose window so large it is astonishing to come upon as you round the corner. The surrounding narrow streets still hold occasional workshops of small tradesmen and artisans, and vestiges of handicraft still survive. Here the guilds of Barcelona flourished—shoemakers and shipmakers, carpenters and coopersmiths—claiming each its own bailiwick. One of the larger of these streets, that of the silverworkers, is Calle de la Plateria—in Catalan, Argenters.

Upon entering the museum that day, I mounted first to the upstairs floor with its blue La Maternidad we liked so well that other time we lugged a sizeable rolled-up print around the continent and home. But what I came upon soon afterward obliterates other memories.

This unanticipated group of paintings so excited my enthusiasm that, in the face of both a copious lack of expertise in art and the absence of critical sources to draw upon, I nonetheless risk a lengthy comment to share the experience. The museum's own brochure limits itself quite properly and objectively to historical background, from which I will gratefully quote.

The series of fifty-eight canvases found hanging "under the generic title, 'Las Meninas,'" Picasso donated in May l968, also in memory of Sabartes. Forty-four are interpretations of what is probably Spain's most acclaimed painting by its most revered artist, Velasquez. And if, like me, you have viewed this classic at the Prado Museum and tried hard, not quite succeeding, to fathom its so great popularity, perhaps Picasso's Meninas would bring Velasquez alive for you as it has for me, children of the twentieth century.

The canvases based on Las Meninas are studies both of the entire composition and of isolated segments of varying scope—heads, figures, groupings. These are pinpointed for the viewer on a copy of the original so that one can refer to the specific portion of the Velasquez to see what Picasso has done with it, adding greatly to appreciation of both the original and its latter day variations.

Whenever Picasso as a youth visited Madrid, he would hasten to the Prado to study the seventeenth century masterpiece. (There, incidentally, he was destined to serve as director from l936 to '39 under the Republican regime.) "Las Meninas" refers to the two young maids of honor who flank the Infanta Dona Margarita, the center of the composition. Velasquez himself is prominently placed with easel and palette, painting Spain's rulers, Philip IV and Queen Mariana of Austria, who are only seen dimly reflected in a mirror well toward the rear. Among others contemplating the portraiture are two dwarfs, one treading on a dog.

A wonder is that, given the precedent, Picasso in his own interpretation withstood the temptation of placing himself within the canvas, to portray Picasso painting Velasquez painting the royal couple.

Half a century passed since those early perusals of Las Meninas at the Prado, much of it abroad, over ten years of it in exile. But Picasso's roots were still deep in Spain when he said in a conversation with Sabartes:

"If one were able to copy Las Meninas in all good faith, upon arriving at a certain point, for example, if it were I who copied it, I might ask myself: How would it be to place that a little more to the right or to the left? And I would try to do it in my manner, forgetting Velasquez. This attempt would surely cause me to modify the

light or change it, as a result of having changed the position of a person. Thus, little by little, I would be painting a Meninas that would seem detestable to the professional copyist; it would not be that which he believed he saw in the work of Velasquez, but it would be my Meninas...."

That was in l950.

Seven years later Picasso shut himself into the top floor of his house in Cannes and put to work "his concept and his proposition." Between August l7 and December 30 of l957 he created the series of fifty-eight canvases that have been hanging in Barcelona since l968.

The immediate basis for the forty-four canvases dealing with Las Meninas was a greatly enlarged photo of the original, sent Picasso by Sabartes. Fourteen of the studies refer exclusively to the Infanta; there are several of the maids of honor, the series being brought to a close by Dona Isabel, "with a gracious bow."

The remaining canvases sheltered under that generic umbrella must have given our prolific artist a needed change of pace during that four-month whirlwind of creation. Mainly they are brilliant with hot Mediterranean sun and vivid waters, and include a portrait of his wife Jacqueline.

What Picasso has done with Las Meninas are, to be expected, Picasso things, the subjects simplified with each successive study. Forms cubed and triangulated. Movements vigorous and startling. Appealing at once to intellect and emotion, pointing up subtleties, stirring reactions. Ugly and beautiful, pixie and profound. A few stand out with a shimmering grace, a lovely gentle aura. The series emerges, as the artist mused earlier such an undertaking would, completely Picasso's Meninas. The placement of a figure a bit more to the left with the consequent change in light this wrought...that's how it all started? And while Picasso predicted an outcome detestable to the professional copyist, to me it was one of the joys of Barcelona.

# # #

The city is so full of interesting museums one doesn't see them all. But I did return to the Modern Art Museum in Ciudadela Park, a site itself delightful.

I was eager to see again the work of Isidro Nonell, whose portraits had impressed themselves on me. Mostly these are of the common woman—gypsy and street types, uncompromisingly poor. Typified by the one titled "Miseria," two women—mother and daughter?—huddled together against the cold for solace. "Soledad," the canvases are called, and "Pensativa," and just so do they come through. Even the few still lifes evoke the humble, the wretched of the earth. Nonell (l873-l911, how young he died!) I found referred to locally as one of Barcelona's best painters...but why isn't he more widely known? Had he lived longer, would he be? More's the pity, the paint on many of the canvases is cracking badly.

Much of the Gothic Quarter in effect constitutes an outdoor Roman museum, with sections of the old wall, pillars and tombstones standing about quite casually for exploration, to slow you down when you should be heading someplace with dispatch. Then, in the History Museum, you descend and see underground portions of the walls standing these two thousand years. The city dates back much further, however, to the Phocaean Greeks and maybe beyond to the Carthaginians, whose Hamilcar Barca, father of Hannibal, just might have lent his name to Barcelona. I remember walking into a tiny shop in the area three years earlier to buy a black lace mantilla for my niece, and finding one of its walls was of glass to protect and yet display some old Roman surface unearthed in construction.

Overlooking the city but intimately within is Montjuich, the mountain by the sea whose slope once held the Jewish ghetto. Today it holds many attractions.

I climbed to one of these one day—the Museum of Catalan Art, housed in the National Palace—past tiered fountains and up a literally breathtaking series of stairs. Here frescoes painstakingly removed from mouldering old church walls in remote Catalonian villages have been installed with infinite care. Altarpieces and paintings, also, are of great beauty and interest, as are the mudejar (Spanish Moorish) panels and ceilings. I had just speeded up my pace through Catalan Gothic—having spent an extra-long time among the earlier things and under pressure of the closing hour—when I saw the sign pointing up the stairs to a Museo de Ceramica.

This I had never seen mentioned anywhere. An extensive collection dating back from early Greek and Roman pottery and shards, through mudejar azulejos—tiles whose glazes were prepared and fired long centuries ago but with such excellence they still glow vividly....Up through majolica bowls from the famous kilns of Talavera and the distinctive green pieces from the less-known potters wheels of Puente del Arzobispo (one of

which I had three years earlier been urged to try)...and to the present day and modern beauties, vases from the fantasy and hand of Maestro Picasso.

One thing further I shall tell of Montjuich. Its Pueblo Español is a "village" left over from an international exhibition; composed of characteristic regional architecture, it is a splendid, an outstanding treat. Traditional handicraft industries operate in a number of the buildings; frequently, if in luck, you can see the work in progress, but you can always make a purchase.

The day of my visit I limit myself to a corny linen square bearing Don Quixote's ode to Barcelona, for subsequent grateful presentation to my tutor...on the sentimental side perhaps, but aren't Spaniards known to be...?

I have entered through a faithfully reproduced Avila gateway and stroll down streets with the houses of Santander and Caceres, Segovia and the Pyrenees, Saragossa and Madrid. Past a graceful bell tower that captures the glint of the sun in its tiles, along the meandering secret whiteness of the Andalusian quarter. I watch them operate a printing press by hand that's reminiscent of Colonial Williamsburg and linger at the potter's to discuss his gleaming tiles portraying Barcelona's artisans of old at work, all the old guilds. Wearying, I pass down the bordering arcade into the Plaza Mayor where, seated just across from Teruel's town hall, I order up paella and a little wine.

# # #

My "Easter break" was coming up and shortly afterward I'd have to move along from Barcelona, for even a carefully unstructured journey has its disciplines. Consultation with Dolores (again apologetically) and with Elsie Winston decided me on Tarragona for Good Friday folklore, and then I'd keep on south along the coast and to Valencia. Perhaps from there I'd board a train to Cuenca, inland in the mountains, rounding out the holiday.

Friday morning, suitcase checked at the Gaudí, I hoisted my Heidelberg bag. Unable to squeeze aboard the holiday-crammed express, a half-hour later I elbowed my way onto the local bound for Tarragona, a hundred kilometers away.

Chapter Eleven: AUTO-DA-FE IN TARRAGONA

This was clearly a time of festival for Tarragona. It's main boulevard, like Barcelona's called the Ramblas and with a center mall, hummed with a minor key excitement sure to swell as Good Friday gained momentum.

Now in good part seaside resort, Tarragona once was Rome in Spain. Built by Caesar and Augustus, favored and further enhanced by Hadrian, Tarraco the Opulentissima held its own with its imperial parent in the display of marble, the array of temples, circuses and amphitheaters. Historic sources say this town then held a million people—mind-boggling as you see it now and think too of the smaller populations of that day. Had Rome itself a million people? Was Tarragona there in Caesar's Gallic Wars, a million strong?

Be it a million it once held or not, the town today holds much of fascination in its relics. A hunk of massive wall still stands, supported by huge Cyclopean stone blocks, its length traversed on high by the Paseo Archeologico with a rewarding view onto the countryside. Built into those Roman walls once stately palaces of the Renaissance have mostly gone to slum and in the streets nearby medieval vestiges abound. The panorama of Spain's history crowds a small area around the cathedral, which itself bridges the transition from Romanesque to Gothic; a huge rose window beckons you to enter by the broad majestic stairway, its restful cloister lures you to stay on and the mosaic paving left by the Temple of Jupiter that once stood on this site titillates one's sense of awe.

I mount the goodly distance, all up-hill, from the railroad station to the Balcon del Mediterraneo, a plaza with a sweeping view out on the beach and sea. I look about, remembering the town. Then on along the Ramblas. How clever of me to have packed only the leather shopping bag—completely adequate using the knapsack technique to roll each item of clothing tightly—for it's going to take awhile to hunt up lodging from the list obtained the day before (again congratulations) at Barcelona's tourist bureau.

The hotel situation is really sad. Only a confirmed crazy would venture into Tarragona on this day without confirmed room reservations! I check out several possibilities and there's no vacancy, but I'm kept happy by the growing festivity in town. A small but noisy band has jumped the gun to troop along the Ramblas practicing; a man in business suit and splashy orange tie emerges onto a balcony to investigate, reports his findings to the family inside. Down a little street I'm stopped short by a very real Christ who's bleeding life away surrounded by disciples. Peering into the dark interior beyond I sight another float still being labored on, surrounded by a coterie of kibitzers.

I reach the Hotel Bea at length, far down the list, third class, where, in a happy decision I settle down at 250 pesetas pensión completa. The food is delightful—such delicate fresh-caught fish and seafood, such elaborate many-itemed appetizers—and the wine the town is noted for.

During the two days to which my visit inevitably stretched, I cultivated the pleasant before-meal ritual of a vermouth and sifon—squish of the seltzer bottle, employed on occasion also to temper a too-potent Spanish wine. Settled in a corner of the dining hall's anteroom on a massive armchair upholstered in atmospheric plush, at my elbow heavy velvet draperies the color of the wine, I was attended by a fifteen-year-old waiter who became my friend and would linger on to help me with my Spanish.

My room, a generous three flights up, was cold and dim and really rather terrible, the bath down the hall much in demand. But the public rooms were spacious and charming, the staff so friendly and my bedroom used so little...well, it was a very small consideration.

The Bea has a remarkable staircase leading from the simple downstairs lobby to the far more elegant dining room floor. This must have been a great and tasteful mansion once, a private palace in the days of some vague century that left its mark on Tarragona together with the Roman things. From the deteriorating street facade you

can't anticipate that broad, aristocratic double stairway with its perfectly proportioned landings, graceful curves and symmetry. Well-cared-for potted plants accenting just the proper intervals show it is appreciated.

Lunch over, I descended that imposing flight, found a crowded, eager Ramblas. Then, as the afternoon's events got underway, the streets of Tarragona flashed—exploded!—back into a vivid past, catapulting me into memory's chalk-scented Tuley high school Latin classroom.

Marching victorious...the Cohorte Romana! Brass shields and breastplates glistening in the sun, brass helmets bobbing scarlet cockscombs, spears glittering, reflections in the polished copper of the kettledrums they bang. Advancing at a run...then breezes off the sea flap up red capes that slap about their thighs. And—as though machismo feared the connotations of the brief and flirty skirts, the sandals lacing up their bare and hirsute legs—they compensate with fierce grimaces of their manhood, Latinized Romans that they are. And they are after all the villains of the piece. Until, that is, one grins and joshes with a friend who hails him from the sidelines.

There follows a sizeable array of pasos, the flower-decked religious floats that cover with real artistry and ample gore the phases of the Passion.

This, it seems, is just the prelude, rehearsal in miniature for the evening's event.

But how impressive was the subsequent procession snaking through the dark blue velvet night of Tarragona, piercing it with darts of flame! The solemn dirges wept and seeped beneath your skin and those taper-bearing Inquisition figures, jet black with high-peaked hoods and slitted eyes, made the blood run cold. Jewish blood anyway.

By the second thousand you were feeling sorry for them because they had a hard time seeing to avoid the puddles of hot tallow—and with bare feet! —and some of them were only kids. Smoke and the acrid smell of burning, dripping wax were everywhere, but after awhile I stopped reflecting on singed human flesh devoured by the flaming bonfires of the auto-da-fe.

# # #

The luxurious Talgo express paused in Tarragona early the next morning and sped on with me aboard.

"Valencia! In my dreams ta-ta ta-ta...Valencia!" sang inside me to the lilting piped-in strains that gently filled the train, and then there was the bullfight music, the paso doble that set my pulses clicking to its castanets. Valencia, four scant hours away, land of El Cid, third city of Spain. The center of the Republican government when time came to flee Madrid. El circulo valenciano de New York, said that treasured old scarf of mine, and we had paid that city homage too, three years before, if only briefly, and liked it well.

Now joltingly and as both train and spirit moved I was writing Mike on that giant postcard of Picasso's Guernica and he would have a time deciphering the shaky scrawl:

"Just passed a castle silhouetted on a mountaintop. Writhing blue-green olive trees on terraced groves held steady by embedded boulders ...patterns in the hillside. A dusty village where the train comes to a rest; glinting in the sun, tiled church dome of a startling blue, symbolic bosom of a tough-skinned amazon of such resilient strength, the Spanish church...and yet so fulsome you would cup it in your hand. As backdrop gleams the Mediterranean that since early morning has come from palest turquoise to ultramarine...now from a tunnel we pull out on rough-hewn cliffs that flank it. Ruins of a Moorish tower, crumbling ochre stone. Cactus and orange trees, pink almond blossoms heralding this year's spring. Soon ugly concrete towers mar the seascape, eyesore playgrounds of the foreigner take over. We stop at Castellon: red-tiled roofs, slum bordering the station, tattered gypsy-eyed children stare at us hungrily. Oh how it fills the pores, this wandering in Spain, and yet I'll never have my fill! Valencia soon... remember?"

Easter Sunday notwithstanding, the city has the look of one who has collapsed shoes off in the favorite old chair, refusing to budge after a surfeit of whoopee. For Valencia's big event has preceded Semana Santa. The Fallas de San José, one of Spain's great festivals, sets Valencia in a week-long whirl then blazes to an end at midnight of St. Joseph's Day in extravagant fireworks and bonfires fed by the giant satirical figures of wooden lath and plaster that have taken over the streets and plazas of the city. I had considered arriving for the climax, but last minute lodging would have been impossible and, at any rate, I was reluctant to leave Barcelona so soon upon arrival.

Even now the hotel scene presents a problem; a sampling having made this clear, I head for where we stayed that other night, knowing it will not be good but will be cheap and in a good location.

Only by agreeing to demi-pensión am I granted a room. Enquiring, I learn as feared that there will be no paella served at that night's meal, for it comes only with the daytime comida. I protest: pero no paella en Valencia? They grin their appreciation but stand their ground. Valencia, of course, is the home of the paella and that area, with its irrigated fields, prime producer of the nation's rice; the city's outdoor market place is crammed with outsize paelleras, the pans in which this savory concoction of saffron rice plays host to seafood, chicken and other good things.

I am shortly walking the broad boulevard that rings the older city where its walls once stood and come to an inexpensive little charmer of a restaurant composed entirely of decorated tiles and featuring paella. Which is very good. So is the red wine that the shuffling graybeard taps into a pitcher for my table from an enormous barrel. The pitcher too is sizeable and seeing the rheumy-eyed simpático old man tipple the remainder from a table just deserted, I make sure not to empty mine...nor have I left the table before the pitcher somehow disappears. Though the service charge is included in the tab I leave a little extra, saying "para vino" in paraphrase of the "para cerveza" which, literally "for beer," is the Spanish tip. The French have their identical "pourboire," the Germans "Trinkgeld," the Norwegians "drikkepenger"—possibly you know of others. What they are all saying is "Have a drink on me," which maybe softens the indignity a little.

A pleasant interlude, a human contact that melts away the tension of arrival and hotel hunt. Now I proceed relaxed in exploration of the old medieval quarter. Entering through an ancient gate of stone, I lose myself in the silence of deserted streets whose main allure in their Easter Sunday emptiness are their names that lead me on, commemorating butchers and shoemakers, artists and counts. And I have reached the cathedral.

Having missed it last time, I made a point of tracking it down now, for it loomed large in much that I had read about Valencia. This was always in relation to the weekly meetings of the Water Tribunal—the centuries-old Cort de la Seo—held at its south portico. The ancient body is still important to modern Valencia, center of a vast agricultural area, Spain's most fertile. The sweet green countryside the Talgo had brought me through was geometrically laid out with lush plots crossed by narrow man-made channels, a complicated irrigation system peculiar to the province and some say dating back to Roman times, most certainly to Moorish. The purely voluntary tribunal is representative of the small farmers and has complete authority over the use of water. Eight canals branch out from the Turia River and a tribunal stands watch at each. The court convenes each Thursday just short of noon to sit in judgment on disputes and violations; its decisions are spoken, never written, and are final, never questioned. The Cort de la Seo is one of the many indigenous cooperative institutions that live on in Spain.

As I neared the cathedral in the gray chill day, I was filled from the first with disquiet; as I walked about its huge ungainliness the sense of confusion only grew, even as I realized this was prompted by the several periods and styles in which it had been built. Moving past (I took a guess) Romanesque with Moorish influence and then baroque, a bell tower, hooked on wings from centuries beyond my ken, I came to a facade distracting in its very bareness.

High up where the trim had loosened, I saw three white doves flutter from a nest...and a soft contentment started to replace unease as I thought of peace and of Picasso. A flapping and a bustle drew my eyes above that spot and then I saw a hundred others perched on nearby ledges and I thought of humdrum pigeons and of Philadelphia's bespattered city hall and often cruddy politics and further that we used to say when children, fifty million Frenchmen and the pigeon picked on me and now I just might be in danger. So I moved away. And moving, pondered, What makes a pigeon of a dove?

At day's end, heading back to the hotel I cut though the Plaza del Caudillo with its name that left me cold but flower stands that cheered and memories that warmed, and I was cutting back through time.

# # #

To our delight we had arrived at Valencia in the midst of celebration and this evening there would be a major folk festival of dance. Did I say evening? Scheduled for ten-thirty, fortunately for us it was a half-hour late in starting. When at half-past nine we were prodding our waiter with the urgency of the situation, he assured us there was time...he knew. At ten o'clock on that hot night in the middle of July, a goodly portion of Valencia's population crowded the corner of the plaza where we waited for a cab. After the obliging traffic officer had tried

without success to help, we moved over to the lineup for the bus. Unable to squeeze aboard the buses, in time we struck up halting conversation with two older men who took us tenderly in hand, eventually pulled us into a taxi with them...and so to the stadium, over the Turia, across the town. They bought us our tickets, advising which, steered us through the maze to the proper section, gate and aisle, then sat with us, fraternizing, exchanging treats of peanuts in the shell and sodas.

That was the most exciting comprehensive exhibition I have ever seen of folk dance. From many provinces of Spain and other European countries were assembled authentically costumed, amateur but disciplined corps of dancers. A golden treat of such magnificence! as in its turn each group would file into the arena in triumphal march and take its dancing stations, then perform. Such enthusiasm from the audience, for each group such a cordial welcome, such applause! Valencianos were a friendly folk, you knew from being there that night. And such dancing! The seguidillas and the jotas in their many regional interpretations—from Caceres and Albacete, Málaga and Almería, Saragossa, Teruel. From Tarragona came the measured dignity of the sardana, and from its corner in the far northwest, La Coruna played its bagpipes, danced muneiras. La Belle France was there with her distinctively attired Arlesian ladies, a Provençal from Avignon and from Bordeaux a candlelit rondeau. Italy danced, and Portugal...and Poland, Germany and Belgium.

Then, a third of the program still to go, it was already half-past-two in the morning....And the early start and drive from Alicante, the daytime exploration of Valencia, the lights and flash and sparkle and the color-crammed performances had all caught up with us.

Firm handclasps and farewell to our companions of the night. And weak flesh swept before it still-willing spirit, along the stadium aisle and into bed.

Chapter Twelve: THE POLLYANNA PRINCIPLE

The train had wound and probed and tunneled through the mountains north and west and half way to Madrid, then stopped just short of the arid flatness of La Mancha's plain and dropped me off in Cuenca.

Celebrated for its cliff-hanging houses, Cuenca possesses a terrain all elevated, scooped and pocked by nature's past contortions. In addition it is an old medieval town with Arab background. These things drew me, true, but

also that here I would sample life in an inland mountain site.

Off to explore...plazas and a park and a small shop full of the pottery for which Cuenca is a center. This included local handmade pieces that set my acquisitive juices flowing: a vase of unusual shape and decoration—a bull

—its potter might have been a fledgling somewhat crude Picasso. Alas, the shop had no facilities for shipping and this trip I was traveling light.

An extended search turned up the tourist office, and a brief visit to a neighboring café allowed digestion of the information (and a sherry) and a laying out of route, meanwhile incurring the friendly curiosity and conversation of the owner and his only other client.

Now begins the ascent up unbelievably steep approaches set in unrelenting stone, climbing five minutes, resting ten, the only way for me and puffing wickedly even so. A cobble-stoned level where, seated on the stone parapet I look below and only after peering closely realize the houses all bear ancient coats of arms now weathered almost smooth. Another terraced plateau, a longer pause: a barren square on which an old church fronts. I sit in the cool raw day and peel and eat an orange, covertly watching three old men on an adjoining bench and, rather more urgently, several darting children with a ball. Studying my map, I choose the path ahead that promises attainment of the heights with the least expenditure of treasured breath.

No sooner have I entered one of the rabbit warren of narrow passages radiating from the plaza than I stop short with a gasp. It isn't the climb this time that catches my breath...I have had virtually to sidle against the cold stone of the wall to avoid the loaded burro coming toward me or I would have missed it, for someone has worked very hard to rub out the startling graffiti. The letters are faint yet they are unmistakable, and even in this off-beat mountain town half way between Valencia and Madrid, even in the thirty-first year of El Caudillo Franco, they still spell Socialismo. A swift cloak-and-dagger survey, nobody coming, I whip out the Instamatic and shoot...though the cavernous lack of light and condition of the message militate against its coming out.

Suddenly my day in Cuenca has taken on a different ambiente. The wind that whips the cliffs above the gorges bites less harshly now; the town itself is less fantastic, and more important than its freakish hanging houses clinging to their cliffside are its people clinging steadfast to their hope.

Yet certainly I will see those Casas Colgadas, and while they are not unique in the world they are interesting to witness and it is exciting to lunch in the inn they hold, staring out my window into nothingness and the river where it glides endlessly below. I had hoped to see the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art also housed there, but it isn't open at this time.

So on it is again. Arched passage in the mountain's rock...head- swimming vista from a garden nook's stone bench...the Plaza Mayor with its old mellow yellow. Through it to the very crest I will mount, the outer limits of civilization, where there is said to stand an ancient castle.

Yet when I had arrived, all that greeted me was a hunk of mouldering stone wall, the sign at its entrance indicating here was El Castillo. There was something of interest however, between the wall and me, where

standing at ease and chatting appeared two civil guards in their distinctive patent leather hats. Aha! thought I—now here's my chance! For I had been wanting since first setting foot in Spain to photograph a Guardia Civil; all tourists do, I guess, as they do Rome's colorful carabinieri.

But don't let the musical comedy hat deceive you, friend. The civil guard isn't there just for window dressing. Nor is it simply a para-military national police force. Organized to curb banditry in Andalusia, it fairly well succeeded—so bitterly was the force hated by the people that instead of brigandage the State got uprisings. For more than a hundred years it has been a powerful element in politics and society, a crutch for the State more reliable than the army and leaned on heavily throughout his reign by Franco. Guardistas never serve in their home district, are not allowed to marry in the district where they serve and live closely supervised in barracks; thus they are kept distinctly separate from the population, whom they regard as enemies. For the masses, on their part, have ample cause to hate the trigger-happy guards who move swiftly and with brutality to counter any sign of popular unrest.

I myself had found an individual guardia polite enough on occasion when consulted for directions, even helpful. But I had read about their callous brutality. Read Garcia Lorca: Their skulls are made of lead, for this they cannot weep, their souls of patent leather....O ciudad de los gitanos!...Rosa Camborios groans, both of her breasts cut off, laid out on a tray. And the poet of the Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard had been cut down by Franco's agents in his genius in Granada, his Granada, noche qué noche nochera.... Thus the sight of a patent leather tricorne inspired me always with a creeping of the skin—-yet at the same time a kind of perverse urge to confront and tangle with.

These particular Cuenca guards, alert to the camera maneuver, called a halt as I began, with an unmistakably stern finger-wagging that cautioned, Now don't you do that, lady!

"Señores," I questioned, politely astonished as I drew in closer, "¿no se permite?" gesturing with my camera toward the gate.

"Sí, sí," but I must station myself beyond them, they were motioning, where they were not included in the picture. Then they stood there watching.

I'd already clicked the film into place. Though I had no desire to snap this uninspired object, I feared confiscation of the contents of my camera now precious from that earlier wall. Moving as requested, I pressed the shutter—not the first film I was wasting—then with exaggerated interest strode through the archway. As expected, there was little to be seen inside...sheer anti-climax after the town itself. When I emerged the guards fastened eyes on me anew. Approaching them I demanded to know, "Is that all there is to that old castle?"

"Sí," they responded amiably, "that's it."

"Pues, no es mucho!" I let drop with a disparaging shrug and turned and walked away.

I was starting back down and had paused to contemplate the enormous gulf confronting me and the challenge of the over-long narrow foot-bridge that spanned it at five hundred feet. If I found the courage, that bridge would lead me to the lower town a different way than I had come. I stood debating. A clatter on the path behind me, then there quickly passed me by a man who led a burro with a jaunty-looking dog balanced on the creature's back. What a sight!...a rib-tickling delight! I groped for my camera again. By the time it was positioned, the team had turned onto the bridge and made it down aways, but I took a chance and snapped.

The little man (how had he known?) stopped and turned about at once; he shook his head at me repeatedly and in an anguished tone that filtered clearly through that distance in the mountain air called out: "No hay derecho! You had no right! You had to ask me first...no hay derecho!"

"Señor!" I shouted back, and I was truly anguished too...he looked a nice man, we should have been friends. "Señor, lo siento mucho! Mucho! Lo siento, Señor!" It was all I knew to say.

I waited till the trio reached the other side then made myself, in penance, cross the bridge.

# # #

I didn't take that nine o'clock Ter express to Barcelona Tuesday morning. I had enquired about a reservation the previous night and now had been milling about the Valencia station for the past hour in an attempt to make one. But the strangest thing about train reservations in Spain—every single time I tried to make one in advance I

was informed the counter didn't open till half-an-hour prior to departure; then, as I stood queued up at the recommended hour, somehow the space would always peter out just short of me.

I tried desperately to climb on board, edge on, hang on, any way. No use. I had absolutely counted on that train, had never even thought about alternatives. The Ter would have got me back, you see, in time...exactly. I had been invited to join Dolores and Julio for a picnic in the countryside and had so looked forward to it. Why hadn't I taken the 6:40 that morning just to be safe? Sure...hind-sight is easy, stupid one! How would I let Dolores know? How make a call to Barcelona?

For the first time on that solitary journey I felt depressingly, chillingly alone. Gone was the romance, gone my assurance. The soul of Spain lay in cold, cold storage on this morning as all those Spaniards hurried by me, united in their unconcern.

Blindly I fumbled for dark glasses in my shoulder bag...although it wasn't sunny in Valencia's railway station.

But one couldn't just let oneself dissolve that way, alone, how many miles from home. Then I reflected, where is home? You yourself are home—like the lowly snail you carry it around. I blew my nose hard...and I remembered the Pollyanna Principle I was beginning to evolve and knew that it would work for me again: somehow, following any reversal, real or imagined, some happy consequence emerges. That was the kind of mysticism I was developing being so much alone...along with talking to myself in full-fledged philosophic sentences and I suspect with proper facial gestures...and murmuring aloud my changing theme songs to match the current country as I roamed its streets.

Three false starts prompted by the information desk's laconic, over-simplified "en frente," and I had found the way to make my phone call, the telephone exchange three blocks away. There a helpful clerk brought me painlessly together with the comfortable voice of Dolores, who somehow understood my tortured sentences as she supplied the preterite tense, soothed my near hysteria and gave me succor; it was not important, we could picnic on another day.

In view of that, I thought, why not make a bonus stop en route and not get back till Wednesday?

# # #

I settled gratefully for the second class coach and a hard seat in a compartment bulging with seven other passengers and their overflowing accoutrements. Barely had I situated myself, when I began to feel that old familiar Evil Eye upon me. Under a dowdy black straw hat the beady penetrating gaze of the woman seated opposite, our knees almost touching, was fixed on me in that great unflinching European stare. But I was learning to weather it with equanimity, not squirming in avoidance or pretended nonchalance but meeting it head on. I looked directly back and the smile with which I acknowledged her visual probe brought on the first question and the subsequent surprise that I was not a francesa. That once-dreaded stare opened up to me my other fellow-travelers too, and the casual comradeship of that compartment.

I was standing later at a corridor window, deep in the healing hypnotic spell of a sun-flecked Mediterranean that beat itself to spray to the rhythm of the movement of the train. Suddenly, an enormous Whack! on my backside. Good grief! I thought, who in all of Spain knows me that well? It was the chunky black-clothed figure of La Señora of the Evil Eye, commenting in her way on our new-found friendship.

A half hour out of Valencia and through its huerta, the irrigated plain, we were seated again when we passed Sagunta with its Carthaginian fortifications topping a steep hill. A scene of sheer romance—I couldn't contain nudging my companion with a "Mire, mire!" But she wasn't grasping the significance of what I wanted her to see. A little further up the line I was at it again, commenting with excitement on the age of a dilapidated castle framed on the horizon, Now it was she who could contain herself no longer.

"Oh that is nothing...it is so old! You should see the brand new buildings in our town...so modern, and far higher too they are...so grand!

"Sí, sí," I responded politely, "they are much better for living in."

Seated to my right was a lean aesthetic lad with good eyes whom I took to be a student. Glancing up now from the French book he had been immersed in, he explained to the Señora that foreigners might find the older things more interesting because they are historic. He looked toward me with a gentle understanding. Every so

often, after that, he would emerge from his book to repeat for me slowly and in simpler terms some conversational tidbit that I wasn't following.

A poke in my ribs brought the little old man on my left into our circle. He squinted up at me out of watery pale blue eyes under shaggy brows and said, "It is better in America than here, is it not true?" With limited resources and the need for diplomacy I hedged, "In some ways sí, in others no." He was a great talker, that old man, undeterred by the quite obvious fact that I understood little of what he said. To supplement speech he would nod and wink at me from time to time, and then look wise over some secret he was sure we shared. At length, smiling broadly he clutched my upper arm and squeezed it, then, raising a cautionary finger in a Just wait till you see! gesture, suspensefully pulled from his pocket a small stack of lottery tickets which my quick estimate made out to total close to ten American dollars.

On this trip I too bought in on a lottery, albeit just to the extent of fourteen cents, when a man thrust into our compartment brandishing the bottle of Fundador and two-foot snaking cellophane bag of varicolored candies that would reward the winner. I started right in fantasizing what to do if I won the prize: why, I would pass the loot liberally about until all inhabitants of the compartment, including me, were gloriously, nauseously sticky and drunk. I need not have bothered, it soon became apparent, despite my neighbors' solicitude in checking out my numbers carefully.

When someone asked where I would leave the train and I replied Benicarló, another lady starer on the opposite bench joined in. She was headed for Vinaroz, just beyond my stop, and would alert me, have no fear. Vinaroz...I knew the town by name...was that where she lived? Sí, sí. And had she lived there long? Only three years; before that time she'd come from Teruel. Ah, Teruel....

Vinaroz...I had seen her village some years earlier at a cinema back home. A movie showing Vinaroz!—she pressed me for details. A documentary, I elaborated, about the Civil War. Silence, unrelieved....Hadn't they understood? Then the student, among us the only one who had not lived through the tumult of those times, reacted with a nod and a soft-toned Ah, sí, sí, of course.

I was reflecting, as we talked, what I knew about this area. With the decision to take another day in getting back to Barcelona, I had again thought briefly of seeing Teruel, considered earlier and rejected as too far afield; with such spotty train connections, it was likely to consume more time than I had available. Again I had to give it up, putting it off for another year when I could make the trip by car.

Teruel, a town set in barren mountains some miles inland, is known to have the best collection of mudejar towers and churches in the country. But its greatest claim to popular fame are its thirteenth-century star-crossed lovers, Los Amantes de Teruel. Who can say whether the tragedy of Diego and Isabel is merely apocryphal or more surely rooted in life than that of Romeo and Juliet, or Peter Gray and Lucy on the Susquehanna's shores, or numerous other celebrated couples who through the ages died of unrequited love. A pair of mummies under outstretched marble figures on a tomb argue its authenticity.

There is no doubt at all, however, about the events on which my interest was largely based: the town is still rebuilding in their aftermath. Teruel had played a pivotal role in the Civil War, lying as it did between Madrid and the heavily Loyalist country along the eastern seacoast. Hemingway and others had written about the battle to wrest it from the fascists in that fierce December of l937, when men dropped dead of the cold in the bleak blizzard-swept chalk hills surrounding Teruel. They had captured the town, but after two months of ruinous bombardment Franco's forces had retaken it. Later, the Loyalists, hoping to stop the enemy's eastward push and save Valencia, had pressed down from the North along the Ebro and crossed the river—had sustained a victory, but it would be their last. Shortly they were driven back and the Rebels, rifles waved aloft and shouting jubilantly, splashed into the sea at Vinaroz—the documentary had caught the scene. Franco had driven his wedge between Barcelona and Valencia, cutting the last of Republican territory in two. Soon Benicarló fell, and Castillon. It was the beginning of the end.

# # #

Descending from the train, I found myself in a nothing railway station in the midst of nowhere. Having figured out to join others in a waiting station wagon, subsequently I arrived in the heart of Benicarló. But I was still in the middle of nowhere. I had asked the driver to indicate el Centro and he had kind of chuckled to himself, then let me off at a spot as closely approximating that description as he could figure. Seeking a more atmospheric side of town with another glib phrase, I asked what must have been Benicarló's entire police force

where to find el Barrio Viejo. There is no older section of more interest, lady, he indicated...this is it. Seeking a hotel with a view I asked directions to the sea, then was off on a lengthy trek. An occasional sign with an arrow hinted at a parador, giving me heart, and I plunged on.

Spain's paradors, in number roughly fifty, I knew to be excellent hotels operated by the government, usually located in a superb locale and setting, perhaps an ancient palace brought completely up to date, in a site of interest to travelers.

In Avila, to the north of Madrid, Mike and I had stayed in such a conversion whose luxurious double room had come to us for four-and-a-half dollars. We had been rather jarred by desk clerks and bellhops whose coldly supercilious, slickly uniformed presences made them seem to us—we had been in Spain less than a week at the time—top Falangist officials. Indeed, after my total experience with paradors, I strongly suspect their staffs of being political appointees with a natural tendency toward corruption. They show little of the warmth of their countrymen...the least nice Spaniards I have come across. That night, under a spooky starless heaven, walking undulating cobble-stoned streets of undeniable medieval origin, we had come to Santa Teresa's own cathedral and to squares and pavements pre-empted by doleful monks and priests and nuns in all-pervasive black. What an ecclesiastic pall they exuded! It must have stifled the youth and life apparent in the evening streets of other Spanish towns. Somewhere we paused to decipher an inscription; it boasted how extremely loyal Avila had been in l936 to Patria and Dios in resisting the anti-Christ Red hordes. And we could believe it: Avila would, from the feel of it, opt for death and decay every time. Here lay the bones of Torquemada and their miasmic evil still hovered over Avila, you could sense it in the air. That inscription was all it needed to drive us early the next morning from that highly-touted museum piece with its perfect walls. It hadn't the heart we demanded of our towns and most often would find in Spain, even if with walls less well preserved.

Now, having arrived at the Benicarló parador, by the time I saw the glossy elegance and hard cold newness and was quoted the shocking price demanded of a single occupant—$5.30 American equivalent!—I was too weary to turn about and look some more. And things had a way of averaging out: in Valencia each of two nights had cost a dollar-and-a-half, and Tarragona's lodging came to even less.

This parador had recently been built from scratch in the seeming midst of nowhere but actually in a strategic spot for motorists along a major seacoast route—since Caesar's day—that terminates at France's border.

I washed up at one of a pair of stylishly cabinetted contiguous washstands, then explored the separate little rooms within my echoing bathroom and came up with toilet and bidet. I stepped out on my private terrace to look upon extensive formal gardens, swimming pool and tennis court and a world of sea beyond. Barely an hour remained me for a nap in one of two enormous beds.

What underlay the stop in Benicarló was actually a projected visit to Peñiscola—this was as close as the train would get me to it. All that I had read of that town had intrigued me; so even had the little bump it made on a map, if sufficiently detailed, where it poked into the sea. "One of the strangest towns of Europe," one source had tantalized, "historically, visually, militarily, Peñiscola was and is inexpugnable." Strong language. Pictures had shown me a zig-zag cone of a town imposed upon a rock emerging from the water, connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land. Moorish white and buff, the houses clambered steeply to a thirteenth century castle left by the Knights Templar, which later headquartered an Avignon pope with his whole schismatic court. Heady stuff.

I had been assured at the desk that the bus to Peñiscola would pass at four o'clock and could be flagged down just across the road. I was out there fifteen minutes early, and then at a quarter past the hour, when I had begun to fear I'd missed it, the bus hove into sight. It didn't stop, however, though I flagged and waved and hooted. Peñiscola lay no more than three or four kilometers away, but I hadn't the spirit left for an hour's preliminary walk, the up-hill tramp it was sure to take, and then the rush to make the last bus back at seven. Twice I tried to thumb down cars, without deliberating and without success. Then, having deliberated, I thought better of the venture, let it go; hauled out again the Pollyanna Principle with its assurance that—even though the inexpugnable had been expunged from my agenda—something....

I walked to the sea and looked to where the famous promontory ought to be and found it, shimmering dream-like in a haze of pallid sun and salty spray. I took my fill, then turning my back upon Peñiscola to seek my alternate adventure, shortly found a modest harbor.

An event of some importance, clearly, was being anticipated by the group of women mostly in black dress and shawl who stood about and chatted or strolled together aimlessly.

In time we were part of a large crowd entering a vast barn-like building identified on the front as the village's Lonja de Pescadores, the fishermen's exchange.

The action mounted as the light began to fade and one by one the fishing boats returned to port. Men with tanned and weathered faces carried onto shore and into the exchange shallow wooden trays that they had filled with that day's catch, attractively, even artistically arranged: I saw a lone octopus straddling meticulous rows of small assorted slithering things, on one side flanked by a two-foot fish whose great eyes bulged and tail still quivered, on the other by some whispy-tendrilled purple creature. They didn't do much specializing, these fishermen, accepting with gratitude and arranging with care what the sea had offered up. Rather, I should say, taking as their due whatever product they had wrested with their labor from the sea.

The Lonja was filling now, with fish and the men who had caught them and with the women in black whose role was not yet clear to me, who crowded the growing piles and stacks of trays to poke a fish, pinch a squid, let drop a pungent criticism or a hearty preference. Soon we were all gathered about the hundreds of fish- and seafood-crammed containers blanketing the heart of the hall, as at their core the auctioneer's lament began to rise. Moving about the area to pinpoint the current focus, he sang out his monotonous routine as one woman after another interrupted with briefly raised index finger and some mumbled password.

I listened long before hazarding an interpretation. Previous auctions of my experience have started off with some minimum figure eventually raised by competitive bidding. In this fishermen's version, however, the auctioneer starts at some optimum figure, then running rapidly downhill is halted at the point where someone decides to take the plunge before the competition does.

Within the hour all trays were spoken for, accounts straightened out with the auctioneer's assistant and the fish transferred from the trays to the small carts, hand-wagons or baskets of the purchasers.

Who were all these black-garbed women? I kept puzzling, for the quantities purchased would rule out their being housewives.

Later that evening as I walked the darkened streets of Benicarló, what minor exploration the town afforded led me to the indoor market place. And there I found them, behind their booths, dispensing the largesse of the Lonja.

The nagging little mystery was nicely neatened out. My day had come full circle. In a larger sense, so had my Easter holiday.

Chapter Thirteen: ANDREA LA SIMPÁTICA

The young clerk at the Gaudí's desk greeted me on Wednesday with a heightened respect. I had had a visitor in my absence, only yesterday...a young lady, Spanish...very nice looking, too! I could see him, usually so imperturbable, licking his chops with that good Spanish male appreciation. She had left a message saying she would return Friday morning at nine unless inconvenient for me, in which case would I kindly phone. It was, of course, Andrea and I was delighted.

Some time before, Dolores had helped me compose a note to Andrea Herrera Ruiz, a Barcelonian Rosalind had met at the University of Madrid, where she spent her junior year. They had become good friends and still kept in touch and my daughter-in-law had suggested looking her up. As the days went by I had given up hearing from her—and now how nice that I would meet her after all!

My suitcase brought from storage, I was soon comfortably re-installed in my old room. The subsequent stop at Thomas Cook's netted a fabulous windfall: the New York postal strike, which had been holding up my mail from Mike, had ended. I rushed back headlong through the lunch hour crush on the Paseo de Gracia to corner a sidewalk table overlooking the Plaza de Cataluña and there over coffee devoured five letters from home. Then read them through more leisurely on a Ramblas bench.

That afternoon, to my last session with Dolores I brought along a wild assortment of the luscious whipped-cream-and-chocolated pastries that Barcelona with her French affinity, above all other Spanish cities excels in. I half expected there would be a picnic, but the day was overcast and we did them justice there in the apartment after class. With them we drank the hot chocolate Dolores had prepared as a special farewell treat—so sweet it should have cured me forever of my sweet tooth, so thick you had to eat it with a spoon. Truly an embarrassment of riches!

Julio had joined us and I consulted with them both on the still barely formulated plans for the remainder of my Spanish stay. Taking stock of my time, I stood at April first—three and a half weeks out of Philadelphia. That left me exactly a month until Basel and the anticipated May Day celebration. About a week for a look at Portugal, I figured, several days for the French Basque country and another few spent basically in travel. Which indicated a sparse two weeks for more of Spain—to include in its midst a quick day or two across the Straits and to Tangier. At the far end of that period—and indeed the far western end of Spain on the Portuguese border—I meant to have at least a taste of Estremadura.

"Well, would you choose Madrid," Julio asked, "to start with?"

Just a day in Madrid in passing, I thought, for having spent much of my Spanish time re-visiting, now I would have a look at parts I had not known before. And preferably warmer parts! for it was a cold spring, still coat weather in Barcelona, and I longed to roast and darken in some healing incandescent sun.

"Sevillle...Cordoba...Granada?"

The majestic trio of Andalusia I had visited with Mike.

When I asked about Cádiz they admired it greatly, gave it points, yet too, the mention of Málaga brought fond reminiscence of a garden city with a soft and fragrant air. Then I must see them both.

"But really," Dolores had added, "the one Spanish city every American

should visit is Almería."

Almería...? the name was familiar, but only vaguely. Why bother to see Almería off in its rather remote end of the map?

"That's where the nuclear bombs fell four years ago from an American plane," she reminded me. "The same poor Almería that, thirty years before, was partially destroyed when bombarded by the German fleet. From the more recent catastrophe, however, although an accident, it is likely they will not recover. Go there...talk to Almeríans. Visit the hospitals crowded with folk still sickening with radiation. Get the statistics...see how the marriage rate has fallen off. Ask the young people why they hesitate to marry. Do they fear to breed two-headed monsters?

I felt the overly rich cherry tart and the thick sweet chocolate that had washed it down churning in my belly, felt the bile rise in my throat. Perhaps I had turned a little green, for Julio, always the gentler of the two, came to where I sat to place an empathetic arm about my shoulder, then turned to his wife.

"Certainly it is not the doing of 'arriet, who feels as we do about nuclear bombs...you must see that, Dolores. The American government is one thing, 'arriet another."

Dolores pulled her chair in closer to me, smiled warmly now and said more softly, "Of course that is so, and we personally are friends and comrades. But try to understand that Spaniards feel a great antagonism toward the United States and it is often difficult to separate country from individual in one's thinking."

There it was again, same old poor thing....Reacting as an individual with a sacred one-of-a-kind spirit, when in fact the world had cast me in a role as a Type, or in several roles as different segments of various Types that got assembled into being this machine-tooled object—this block, this stone, this Klotz....An American....A tourist....But never me, just pure and simple unadulterated Macey.

I remembered so vividly that time last week when, in what probably came through as a naive and foolish formulation couched in my execrable Spanish, I had asked Dolores what prospect she saw of Franco's overthrowal.

"Qué expectativa...?" she had mused in those fine deep Catalan tones, then with a sad non-smile shrugged deeply and tilted her head to peer at me there at the desk. "What can the prospect be," she had finally replied, "when the moment an action starts, your battleships—ever on the alert nearby—will steam into our harbors to suppress it!"

So why quibble over a pronoun? To the people of Spain I am America, whether I win or lose one sparring match. Just as at home I am in all those other pigeon holes, intellectual exercises be damned.

Such things aside, it was in sincere and abiding friendship that we parted.

# # #

Friday morning shortly past nine, Andrea walked into the Gaudí's lobby clutching two perfect long-stemmed crimson roses. I liked her at once as my eyes met level dark blue ones above a spray of freckles. Sandy brown hair obliterated a corner of her forehead then tumbled to her shoulders; had she curbed its graceful wave and trained it lank she could have been a Penn or Temple coed. The shaggy gray sweater that she wore she filled out admirably and there was a general sturdiness, yet grace, apparent in her bearing. A touch of shyness accompanied composure as she advanced to shake my hand.

Andrea won the immediate approval of my waiter friend also, at the café around the corner. He hovered at our table making small talk as we sat over coffee and the awkwardness of first acquaintance began to thaw.

Her English was adequate but little used since the Madrid days with Rosalind and she lacked confidence in it. Sometimes with good reason: the German she was now studying would occasionally take over without her realizing, or the wrong tense creep in, or she would use "must" instead of "should" or "we" in place of "you" and this would throw me for awhile. When the conversation turned into more abstract or philosophical channels she might have trouble finding the English and start to give it up; then I would urge: "Say it in Spanish...or German," and take a little of the burden on myself. My own sporadic efforts to sustain the talk in Spanish were always faltering and short-lived—why limp along in self-conscious mono-syllables when it wasn't vital to? For me it was a welcome respite.

Andrea apologized for not responding earlier to my note, which she had not seen until Tuesday; a graduate student at the University of Barcelona, she had passed the Easter holiday in Tarragona (!) Now she was here to spend the day with me, her car at our disposal.

Although we both had come so recently from that direction, it was back south along the Mediterranean we chose to turn the little tan Seat.

What a morning for the twenty-five mile drive to Sitges! Brilliant sun and liberating breeze...and before long Andrea swashbuckling those heart-stopping curves like a pro. Confidently she would swing out along a precipice where it overhung the undermining foam-and-brining sea—then sweep careening in to skim the inner rim of the ravine.

Conversation as we drove was difficult, but I was busy with some private calculations: Suppose Andrea were twenty-three now and accustomed to subduing these horrendous roads since age sixteen...still, this would give her just one-fourth my years of driving...and that, or at the outside one year more, was as much experience as she possibly could have. On this road I personally would take the wheel only with reluctance, would proceed only cautiously, hugging the inside, passing rarely, leaning on my horn to round each curve. But Andrea, enured to mountain driving through her seven, eight intensive years of it, takes it blithely in her stride; her demeanor hints, indeed, at early training as a trucker....

At length, my anxiety put to rest by her supreme self-confidence, I leaned back and enjoyed the beauty we were twining through and eventually the rhythm of the ride itself.

When we reached a relatively reasonable stretch of road, I took the opportunity to compliment her, then to inquire, "How long have you been driving, Andrea?"

Raising her left hand from the wheel she started counting on her fingers, crooking each in order thoughtfully, "Well, let me see...." We were starting to negotiate another bend when she removed her right hand also, to resume the count, having touched the sixth finger lightly she hesitated, then turned to me to ask, "This is the beginning of April, isn't it?"

But I didn't know what month it was just then, only that I wanted very much to live it out. Eyes focused straight ahead for both of us, I forsook the amenities and urgently suggested placing both hands on the wheel.

She obliged at once, then nodding and with satisfaction summing up her findings: "Yes, it's almost six months now that I've been driving!"

# # #

Let me not overdraw these circumstances just to make a point, leaving Andrea in their wake a breezy type with devil-may-care propensities. That she is not. Rather, she is a warm and serious young woman, inclined toward intellectuality and with a natural reserve that wears away but gradually as our friendship deepens.

And this is happening as we talk and walk through Sitges—popular beach resort, sometime artists colony, town of lasting charm. Down the broad café-lined promenade that scribes a crescent on the palm-fringed sands. Through old streets with the blanched white Moorish look of Andalusia. Past a massive palace in a sort of "keyhole Gothic," restored early in the century for his use by Chicago tractor magnate Deering. As in that same time the Cau Ferrat just opposite held the studio of Santiago Rusiñol of art nouveau fame, providing Barcelona artists with a summer gathering place. (Both now museums.) A turn through the unembellished old church that, modest in its sun-baked plastered yellow, manages nonetheless to dominate the beach.

Later we rest at a sidewalk table outside a small café, absently eyeing strollers on the promenade. Let our consciousness ripple just beyond along ice blue satin waters to a faintly drawn horizon. Sit shoes off over sherry, alternating brief stretches of unhurried silence with whatever comes to mind. Faces tilted to absorb the sun, ourselves absorbed in utter relaxation. Imbibing huge draughts of essence of the Mediterranean.

Before we ordered drinks, I had told Andrea about my recent experience at the bar in Benicarló. To my knowledge there were many kinds of sherry, varying in strength: fino, manzanilla, amontillado (as in The Cask of), olorosa, others. I usually wound up ordering a fino, one of the dryer types, simple to remember and fairly easily understood. That time at the parador I suppose I was feeling adventurous and requested manzanilla. When what must surely have been a cup of hot tea was set before me I stared at the young man in astonishment and rather testily observed it was sherry I was after—and eventually was served with such. (To complicate the telling...later I would learn that the wine manzanilla is not technically a sherry, is stronger and cheaper but close.) Where had I gone wrong, I asked my new friend. She knew little of such matters, Andrea replied, but when ordering sherry unfailingly called for Tío Pepe, had picked it up from an aficionado uncle, Tío Carlos.

This had certainly to simplify procedures. Trying it on at once for size and finding it sufficiently dry and eminently potable, from there on Tío Pepe it would be.

So we were sitting over our second round of Tío Pepes when a pair of Guardia Civil strolled past. Was it forbidden to photograph them? I asked Andrea, relating the Cuenca incident. While there was actually no law against it, she replied, it was severely frowned upon and guards went to some lengths to prevent it.

I used the topic to draw her out politically, as I had been wanting to yet without endangering our relationship. Americans generally had a dislike for the Guardia Civil, I said, because of their role in the Civil War and since. Was this true of Spaniards, who, it appeared to me, also lost no love on them?

Actually, she responded, their unsavory reputation dated much further back in Spanish history. "Do you notice how they always walk in pairs...for self protection? They are known, in fact, as 'las parejas,' the couples."

Then I told Andra how exciting it had been to hear that Palm Sunday congregation in Nosotros Venceremos...and conducted by a priest.

Just as with Dolores, she expressed no surprise. "It is not uncommon for us to sing such songs. The young priest in my church often leads us in spirituals; they are popular in Spain."

I remembered that just a few days earlier on the train to Cuenca I had heard a familiar tune and followed the corridor until I tracked it down. Three compartments away a pig-tailed ten-year-old sat swinging her legs in rhythm as she sang in Spanish, When the Saints Go Marching In. And there was the Catalan volume of Negro spirituals I had glimpsed in the bookstore widow.

I mentioned having seen La Joven, the film about the hunted young black, and remarked the audience response it had elicited. And, too, my surprise at finding Coretta King's book more widely marketed in Barcelona than in Philadelphia.

"Oh yes," responded Andrea, "there was great mourning here when Martin Luther King was killed. We Spaniards are very sympathetic to American Negroes, you know, and to their struggle for their rights."

I said something fairly cautious like, "Are most people here also interested in bettering things in Spain?"

She looked up from her sherry. "Sometimes it is easier to be for freedom across the ocean than at home."

Cryptic. How was I to understand that? Was she remarking a human failing or, rather, political limitations? At any rate, she seemed reluctant now to pursue the conversation deeper into such channels and I desisted. After all, she knew me as little politically as I knew her.

Later, when we had resumed our walk, I ventured to ask about the progress of the textile strikes, explained I was especially interested because I had once been a textile union organizer. Here in Spain, I remarked, one never saw picket lines or any visible sign and couldn't tell if a strike was on or not.

At this Andrea stopped abruptly in the street, clutched my arm and

turned sharply to eye me in disbelief. "Oh, you can't do that here, didn't you know! You can't have picket lines in Spain!"

It was after two o'clock when I persuaded her we must have some lunch. Sea air and sherry had fulfilled their classic mission and I was ravenous. Andrea poked into a pastelería in the narrow white street we were walking and asked where one might get a good meal typical of the area and reasonable.

The obliging Señora did not lead us astray. Back on the waterfront we chose a table in the sun and partook of mussels in a spicy green sauce and paella crammed with creatures out of the sea that washed the beach so close at hand; then carried on with rabbit accompanied by a tender artichoke.

Before leaving Sitges, we sent off postcards to Rosalind and Mike respectively, commemorating the day spent together so pleasantly. The card I selected showed the town in all the gaiety of its vivid Corpus Christi festival. Pictured, Andrea explained, was the Alfombras de Flores ceremony, in which the streets are garnished with living carpets of flowers, each participant contributing his share to the growing floral runners. Exquisite designs were being laid on portraying forest green leaves and purple pansies, such artfully stylized fruit as polka-dot oranges and high-lighted cherries that shaded from scarlet to black-tinged maroon.

"It must be fantastic to witness!" I exclaimed, my mind beginning to turn handsprings: Corpus Christi Day, May 28th this year...should be in southern France about then, so close to the border...freewheeling Eurailpass...comfortable Catalan Talgo...might just manage it for a day!

Andrea agreed to join me there if she possibly could but neither of us seriously expected we would rendezvous in May.

En route back to Barcelona we detoured to visit the Iglesia Gaudí in Colonia Guëll near Baudillo, found only after asking our way three times. Late in the l800's when Gaudi's patron, the industrialist Count Eusebio Guëll, moved his huge textile establishment and its workers from Barcelona to the suburbs, he commissioned the inventive architect to build a church for the new colony. We found it on a hillside, amber in the filtering late sun, leaning up against the steeply angled pines which add their forms to its identity. About the stairs and pine-cone littered grounds a wedding party, elegant in upper class accents and smart attire—hardly textile workers—lingered prior to departure. We entered the crypt, which is the church's major feature, and stood as under some fantastic mushroom looking up at Gothic vaulting structured out of jagged brick. Here was not the whimsicality of other Gaudí creations, but a rugged paean of strength, a modern declaration tempered by an earlier art.

Back within the city, Andrea, still the unfaltering guide, must take me to the Pedralbes Monastery, a favorite of hers. Here we could see, she said, notable Ferrer Bassa murals, a three-tiered cloister and a queen's tomb—all of them, at the hour it had become, shut away. We could, however, stroll through gardens slumberous with medieval peace and calm. On that garden's wall I first became aware of the city's coat of arms, pointed out by Andrea, and later would remark it everywhere. The four white stripes drawn through a field of red were formed long centuries ago, 'tis said, where the first Count of Barcelona clawed protesting fingers through his life's blood spilled upon the ground as he lay dying on the field of battle. Emerging on a hushed back road, we walked past stately Spanish homes, then from its heights surprised a sudden panorama over Barcelona as the city's lights came flashing on.

Along the Diagonal, we checked out the new university campus then forged through the hub of the new city into the heart of the old and unto the Hotel Gaudí.

Andrea, driving off into the cheerful dusk of the Ramblas, says she will return on Sunday. It has been one love of a day.

# # #

I spent Saturday morning in another, more leisurely look at the Catalan Art Museum, then took off for the Parque Guëll.

Gaudí's park stands on a mountain slope at the outer reaches of the city. At the end of the bus line I enter the deserted grounds by their back gate into what is surely the haunt of witches, a grotesquerie of desolation.

Paths that bewilder—bridges treacherous and tortured—misshapen dank caves be-daubed in shit-brown plaster concealing misshapen evil gnomes preparing to pounce. Then, as in time I come upon another human form and, heart still chugging, find my way through the maze to the other end, the joyous whimsy of Gaudí takes over. A jolly dragon of a staircase. A noble giant of a leaning-columned hall with undulating ceiling in mosaics: jagged bits of glass, shards of pottery, a doll's head interwoven. The sinuous continuous free form bench encircling a mirador with a misty view on Barcelona...concealed in the polychromed tile, whatever struck the artist's fancy: hidden forms and treasured aphorisms. Gaudí's most famous wrought iron gate, poetic and imaginative, watched over by color-frosted ceramic towers and Hansel-and-Gretel gatehouse in Mod overtones. Fantasy overflowing, Parque Guëll. Surrealism and Pop Art in a lusty infancy.

This too, you will know from its name, was commissioned by the Count. Slated to become a sixty-house garden city it never got past two—quite

in keeping with Gaudí's reputation as an erratic who rarely finished a piece of work. But as far as he got—Parque Guëll included—struck me always as delightful. Is it ART? First you define the term.

# # #

That morning the waiter at my favorite café had gone out of his way to stay on and talk while I sat at the counter trying to make one flaky rich croissant come out even with two cups of coffee. He had never shown quite that interest in me before.

"Su amiga es muy simpática," said he appreciatively.

"Yes, but a little young for you," I responded, by way of small talk and meaning to be amusing.

"Me, I am too old for no one!" His grin darted back at me over a shoulder as he moved down the line to greet another comer. He was back shortly, arms akimbo by my coffee cup, with the urgent request that I bring my friend back in to visit.

So it was there we headed first thing Sunday morning. Nor was it sheer altruism on my part, for it was then, with Andrea's excellent assist and the waiter's active cooperation, that I got my detailed analysis of the multitude of tapas that were intriguing me. Afterward Andrea made the point that our waiter friend was surely not a native of the city; his good-humored nature and easy-going informality made him out more likely Andalusian...his was not a Barcelonian temperament, she insisted.

She readily agreed to help me also with the travel housekeeping that would wind up my Barcelona stay, for this night I would leave for Madrid. My suitcase was packed and I had made up a small parcel of accumulated flotsam and jetsam, basically printed matter, I could not bear to part with yet would not willingly lug through Europe. When I enquired at the desk about mailing procedures, the daytime clerk suggested I let him handle it, and though this undoubtedly hiked the cost out of all proportion to the object's worth, it became a fait accompli as he relieved me of both package and decision. At any rate, now that was off my hands.

Next, with Andrea's help I would square things away at the railroad station. Walking through the Plaza Real to where her car was parked, we found ourselves in the heart of the humming coin-and stamp-collectors market where under languid palms enthusiastic trading and debating dominates the Sunday mornings of the buffs.

Bag in a locker, that too off my hands and mind. At the reservation counter where in the past I had met with little success, Andrea without effort leaped all hurdles. This young woman was so personable that men rushed to outdo themselves for her. (She also spoke Spanish.) Shortly I had a couchette reserved not only for the trip to Madrid, but also for the following night to Málaga.

The couchette, I understood, was a budgeters paradise on rails in Europe, a compromise Pullman sleeper. Certainly it was reasonable at 150 pesetas a night—some few coins past a two-dollar bill. With interest I awaited the proof in the sleeping.

Again I urged Andrea to accompany me to the corrida that afternoon to see El Cordobés challenge the bulls. I had recently read his biography, and here was a chance to witness Spain's most controversial matador at work. But Andrea had no desire to go. Distinctly now I had the feeling that, just as Dolores had considered my interest in religious folklore counter-revolutionary or at best touristic, so my young friend looked upon enjoyment of the bullfight as a rather gauche old hat. While Andrea, a devout Catholic, would certainly not concur with Dolores' estimate of the former, regarding the bull they would certainly agree. What could I say?...These things just happened to interest and excite me, politics and other things aside.

Was her attitude typical of Spanish youth? I asked Andrea. She thought that by and large it was—certainly of the college student. And in general, futbol, she said, was far more popular, drew larger crowds. (And football—or this was really soccer—I would make prodigious efforts to avoid in any country.)

Returning to the hotel, there was time to drive back slowly through the city for another look. Time for another salute to Gaudí's La Pedrera fantasy and the Apple of Discord.

Then, farewell to Andrea, who had filled my closing days in Barcelona with warm companionship and pleasant happenings and insights into Spain.

Who, together with Dolores and Julio Santillán....Together with the waiter of the flashing eyes, with the night clerk and the day clerk and the not-to-be-neglected in-between clerk. The Señora at the market counter of the fragrant cheeses, the Señorita of chaste sunny-centered daisies and calendulas that blaze, the Señor at the periódico kiosk. The strollers with whom I loved to ramble on the Ramblas and the sitters whom I loved to sit with on the Plaza Cataluña. My little Nicola, need I say, together with the others at the crummy pensión....

Andrea who, together with all these and many more, had made the words of Don Quixote leap alive for me from off that neatly bordered linen square that I, after all it seems myself a sentimentalist, had chosen not to present to anyone, but had just shipped home to hang upon my wall and treasure through the years.

Barcelona—how Cervantes mournful knight had hit it right! Archivo de la cortesia....Barcelona....

Fountain of courtesy, refuge for strangers, asylum for the poor; home of the courageous, with revenge for the offended. Oh, pleasant proferrer of firm friendship in so unique and beautiful a site!

Chapter Fourteen: MADRID MAMITA MIA

On the road again, the anticipating west-bound tracks hurtling me through half the width of the Iberian peninsula. In the late night diner a group of lusty medical students returning to Saragossa josh and flirt with two friendly girls from my compartment and the overflow from across the aisle share my table, thus including me as I drink white wine and refer heavily to my pocket dictionary.

I woke with the first faint light and parted the curtain on starkly naked mountain peaks. Climbed down the ladder from the upper berth where I had spent a fairly comfortable night fully clothed and blanketed by my coat, thus warm. Stood at the chill corridor window to watch the sun rise and until I could sit awaiting coffee in the diner. Then drank huge cups and ate thick hunks of toast with butter and peach preserves and meanwhile wrote to Mike....Wrote of the red hills and the rust red villages they held that sprang from the russet dirt, so well camouflaged you almost doubted they were there. Once we stopped at a tiny station saying Arcos de Jalón and I could see frost glinting on the rooftops. Then it grew craggier again and the huts became of stone and in a while I thought we must be in or near the Guadarrama range but east of where Hemingway's bell had tolled.

# # #

All calm efficiencyI shuttled from my arrival point over to the Atocha station and checked my bag, readied for that night's departure. But by the time I emerged on the streets of Madrid my posture had been vastly altered. Various railway tunnels and station passageways had cautioned quite routinely not to enter: "No Pasar"—which in my readily triggered mind's eye became at once "No Pasaran!" And then I was breaking out in goose bumps and having to adjust all over again to being in Franco's Spain. And I was straining to assemble dimly and no doubt faultily recollected snatches of melody and phrase; to confront and exorcise the evil, hum it out of existence in my mind:

Spain darkens under cloud when sun should fill the land

Spain thunders out clear and loud to stop the fascist hand

To stop the hand, to free the land

The workers go marching, their guns make the fascists understand

No peace, no rest...

But at Madrid, They shall not pass—No Pasaran!

Then I was having to angle just right, according to my map, across a complicated traffic circle to come out where I wished to be and my thoughts were necessarily diverted. I had passed the Prado Art Museum with a nod and a promise and was continuing along the spacious modernity of the Paseo del Prado when my mind tracked back again, this time picking up on my oft-indulged-in Spanish theme song that brought somehow not sadness or alarm but the pleasant warmth of belonging, of oneness with this country that I loved.

Mamita Mia was the melody that filled my being now—Los Cuatro Generales, really, from the old Spanish folk song, Los Cuatro Muleros. The notorious four insurgent generals—Franco, Mola, Varela and Queipo de Llano—were each in command of one of the four columns converging on Madrid. (The "fifth column" were the undercover agents behind Loyalist lines whom General Mola boasted of.)

So now I advanced on my Madrid, not Franco's, humming it softly aloud, strumming it loudly within:

Los cuatro generales, los cuatro generales, los cuatro generales,

Mamita Mia, they tried to betray us

Madrid, qué bien resistes, Mamita Mia, los bombardéos

They laughed as the bombs were falling,

Mamita Mia, los Madrilenos

Madrid dich wunderbare, Mamita Mia, they wanted to take you

And all your tears of sorrow, Mamita Mia, we shall avenge them. Thus heartened I continued my sojourn through the streets of Madrid.

And since, as it happens, there does exist a letter to Mike written on the train to Málaga that serves the purpose, perhaps I would do well to carry on by way of correspondence the story of my day spent in Madrid.

Tuesday morning now, two hours short of Málaga, and again I am the early bird at table. This amuses you, Mike? Well, the circumstances are unusual, and I don't just mean sleeping stretched out six to a shut-in compartment in a bouncing train, five strange Señores and yours truly. (This time I had a lower berth and there was a kind of atmosphere of mutual awareness with the really very nice man on the opposing berth that made for a sleep inhibiting self-consciousness—at least on my part—as we lay two feet apart.) No, not just that. Let me tell you what had keyed me up the night before—and I guess I'm still not really steady after some few hours of sleep induced by the good stiff fino bolted in the station and the half-liter of rugged Spanish vino on the train.

If I must have a scapegoat, Time Magazine was as much to blame as anything. With barely twelve hours in Madrid between trains I walked the city with determination, concentrating on the older section.

I did get to the Prado, disciplining myself to stay with the few things I just had to see again, mainly those magnificently savage black grotesqueries of Goya's that must have been his final comment on man's ferocious depths and bent for self-destruction, and El Greco and—with a new awareness since seeing the Picasso series that I think I wrote about—Las Meninas.

I tracked down our old hotel, primarily to see if the adjoining leather shop still featured Guernica. Well, it didn't—in the mural's place hung one of those lush Rubens fatties you were so taken with in the Prado.

And that little square near our hotel—the Plaza del Carmen—I found it too. Remember its very special flavor, and how, cutting through it to the Puerto del Sol we would imagine it devastated by Junker bombs, flames fed again by the olive oil of its one-time market stands....I shivered as I passed.

I was proceeding along the Gran Via when a young boy thrust a flyer at me. Decorated with a menorah, it extolled in both Spanish and broken English the wares and virtues of the Boutique Shalom and Sefarad Artisanat. It's quite respectable again to be a Jew in Spain. Rumor hath it, even, that Franco has some Jewish blood, though it must be well apostatized by now. (Also rumored he has cancer—is so feeble they have to prop him up from behind for TV appearances—hope springs eternal!) When I raised the whole Jewish question, Dolores said there is no Jewish problem, no anti-semitism in Spain. That Jews are now welcome to move in and bring along their very desirable foreign exchange. Well, small wonder no anti-semitism when Jews total barely several thousand and basically live only in the major cities. But that ancient Inquisition air about the place dies hard with me—and you know I'm not that "Jewish." Remember in Toledo when we puzzled back and forth near where El Tránsito should have been and couldn't find it and then that lovely man we stopped to ask climbed into the car and led us back there and we hadn't spotted it because none except a Catholic house of worship was allowed to be identified outside, and I thought he must be Jewish from his empathetic air and smile and the fact of his going completely out of his way to guide us to la sinagoga, but then we found there hadn't been a Jew living in Toledo (that the goyim knew of) since l492.

And now where am I? Let's say on the Plaza Mayor, where I found its ring of seventeenth century buildings intact. Then the maze of little streets about it, and Calle Cuchilleros, where I considered lunching at Botin's, the Hemingway (read tourist) place where we dined on roast baby pig. But Botin's doesn't look the same in daylight and without you and by present standards was going to cost a lot and I wasn't that hungry anyway. So I settled instead for the cool dark of an atmospheric workingmen's bar, where I stood up with them at the mostrador and drank white wine and ate delicious tapas of cold Spanish omelet and a bit of empanada gallega.

I did a good deal of back and forthing, not exactly scientific but I was having fun and my feet were holding up OK. Somewhere I had noticed on a news stand the current issue of Time Magazine, featuring Race in the USA and, since I had fallen so behind in the news, to buy a copy seemed a good idea. Over a vermouth I skimmed through a little of the cover story, but there were too many distractions on the Plaza Tirso de Molino which my table faced, and I must not disrespect old Tirso who four hundred years ago gave the world Don Juan,

so after awhile I put down Time, bought some peanuts from an ancient lady with badly perforated teeth but anyway a rakish air, and just sat watching Madrilenos jostling past, vigorous as all get-out in that quarter. Then I joined the parade, really gave the area about that square a proper going over.

Break just for the moment....The passing scene is lovely here though somewhat rained on: lush and green, all olive trees and little whitewashed houses—mountains on the left and on the right the ribbon-like Rio Genil, offshoot of the Guadalquivir.

And in Madrid once more....I have worked my way eventually to the Plaza de Espana for a lingering look at the monument of Cervantes, his bumbling knight and the shrewd old Sancho Panza. Then I stroll along the avenue that fronts the Royal Palace.

By now it has grown dark. I have in mind to relax over a heartening dinner before heading for the station, at the little mesón which comes highly recommended in more than one reference I seem to remember. I had in fact copied out the information from the DPA Kid's guide book as we sat over coffee en route to Luxembourg: tucked away in a corner behind city hall, it says and gives the street address; good roast pork and lamb, inexpensive, table wine first rate, groups of serenading students...what more can I ask? What I could ask, ideally, is someone for directions how to get there. For at length I have scoured to no avail the precincts of city hall. A problem is that many of the minor streets bear no signs, and I range about the very heart of old Madrid seeking a clue. In one hand I hold a small half-open city map, referring to it often, in the other grip my rolled-up Time (Time on my hands?) and when, in the light of a street lamp I open my bag and haul out my notebook to verify the restaurant's address or complicated name, I juggle all these things around. And I verify and juggle often as I puzzle and seek.

In time I reach into my bag and the little notebook isn't there. Just isn't there at all, though I grope and rummage and bitterly refuse to acknowledge the devastating fact. I stop at a parked car to dump the many contents of my bag upon its hood and search them desperately, claw through the unfortunate contents of my bag in mounting frenzy. My indispensable little notebook lost! And what was in it? I am trying frantically to recollect: all the addresses from home, details and sizes on the few requests I've taken, a running list of books I've considered of interest, jotted impressions and comments—now what did I say in them, there's the rub! And the names and addresses of the Winstons and Andrea and Dolores and the Spanish refugee in France. It is this last category that makes me worry so: that those names appear together with an American's interest in all those books, together with the myriad indiscretions I am sure to have committed to paper.

Break for the noble mountain we just tunneled through and groves of orange trees that run along the tracks....

For more than half an hour I probed in mounting panic the dark alleys and hidden courts where I hadn't been able to locate the little mesón and now was unable to recover the notebook. You've never seen me, Mike, in such a stew. I must quite literally have shook as with a fatal fever. At one point two darling little girls joined me in the hunt, all to no avail. The cuadernita was truly perdida, lost, completely vanished away.

Then, as for the third time in that search I approached City Hall Plaza with its myriad uniformed guards, a hauntingly familiar scrap of paper caught my eye. Floating downstream in a trickle of water in the Calle Mayor gutter barely fifty feet from Madrid's city hall: Rhonda's glove size and the preferred colors for Marian's shawl. Sopping and filthy little ort, oh precious, priceless little gutter snipe. I swooped and stooped and scooped it up with glee, then ran along the curb and gathered them in where I spotted them one at a time, some in the water and some atop the curb, with tire marks or with gobs of spit, others snatched from under people's very heels....I welcomed and cherished them, every one: Nosotros Venceremos and bacalao tapas and Freud to Fromm, and yes, the names and addresses that had caused my apprehension. Within a half block I guess I had them all, all of the coveted sheets.

Whatever economical soul had picked up my notebook where it had slipped away unobserved from my cluttered grip was welcome to the unused pages he had salvaged as he tossed the others overboard—enjoy them well, you bastard!

You know my imagination, Mike. Were the contents actually that incriminating if a city hall guard, say, had picked up the notebook? Who knows? But this is, after all, a police state—and I so utterly alone, my thoughts and fears unshareable, so utterly my own to magnify and dwell on.

By now it was too late for dinner prior to train time and in my existing state it probably would have made me vomit. I indulged myself in the luxury of a taxi, redeemed my suitcase, located the proper train and car and threw my things onto a bottom berth to claim it. With fifteen minutes left until departure, still trembling I jumped down and headed for the station bar.

I was in the dining car as we pulled out of Madrid, anticipating getting myself together over some wine and feeling that I might just keep on going and call it quits for Spain—that it was a fink country that could do this thing to me—that I would scream next time I saw a Spanish guard.

# # #

Haven't got this off yet, as you see. Thought it was wiser mailed from outside Spain. Meanwhile will improve the shining hours by writing to you.

First I must give you the pay-off on that shattering Madrid experience. Unpacking my suitcase the following day, I found among my papers a glowing reference from the budget guide book to that very restaurant I had so disastrously sought; and this gives its location as near the Plaza Tirso de Molino (!)—a good ways off from city hall. Which now go sue.

Surely you must know that after one look at beguiling Málaga I was hooked on Spain again. The center for a still-expanding area of commercialized resort towns, the city has nonetheless a flavor of its own, a gentleness verging on excitement that made it dear to me. This, despite the intermittent rain that welcomed me and a temperature that wouldn't budge past 55.4 degrees. (Am now able to calculate the familiar Fahrenheit, thanks to Andy's recently received instructions: multiplied the thirteen degrees Centigrade by 9/5 and added thirty-two...correct?)

Here the palms of Andalusia line luxuriant corridors of park where horses clatter with their buggies beside a bustling port. Pungent outdoor fish stalls lead to a spicy-scented flower market. Delightful ruins of a Moorish palace climb a hill with bougainvillea-laden terraces that monitor the city and the sea—and tinkling fountains where, look hard and you will find a veiled princess rippling pale aristocratic fingers through the tiled reflecting pool.

At a café's counter I drank sweet Málaga and ate chanquetes—tiny crispy fish. Then entering an arcade I stopped to watch a British hippie couple play guitar and sing, then pass the hat, and somehow struck up conversation with a man from Pittsburgh; how was Pennsylvania when I left? he asked. Now that brought to mind somehow that night long years ago in a Milwaukee bar when you and I got chummy with a soldier and found that he too hailed from Pennsylvania; you stuck out your hand, exclaiming "Landsman!" whereupon the soldier, understanding what you said as Lansdowne, pumped it with enthusiasm and shot back "Upper Darby!" To this day, as you know, neither of us can avoid an idiotic "Upper Darby" at the drop of a "Landsman."

Later I boarded the Toonerville Trolley of a narrow-gauge railroad line that runs along the coast, having paid twenty-four pesetas for a round-trip ticket to some place called Fuéngirola—a pig in a poke, but the distance seemed just right. Many passengers descended at Torremolinos and the train paused just long enough for a quick glimpse of Coney-Island-on- the-Mediterranean. But Fuéngirola hasn't quite lost all its fishing village aspects yet. As I arrived in town I saw a tethered black billy goat silhouetted against the many-storied white condominium a-building, which struck me as significant.

I walked along the sea virtually in solitude for what seemed miles, the sun warm on my face (already quite tanned), then watched some little boats being beached and the loaded wooden trays carried off.

By the time I returned to the center of things I was famished. I walked along the Paseo Maritimo comparing menu, price and atmosphere, and eventually came up with a two-fork bar-restaurante that appeared to meet my qualifications. But while the bar below was packed, I was alone in the simple restaurant upstairs—it being past the hour of the comida—and that is always rather discouraging. To cheer myself I ordered a half bottle of the red Valdepeñas, a first for me and exquisite, and a full four-course dinner, and not until it came time to settle up did I realize the fixed price menu had included only three. So I needn't have stuffed so unconscionably and still left half the food...and it was costing l70 pesetas a la carte instead of the anticipated hundred. But what a delightful meal—gourmetíssima!

Having little to do between courses but gaze out the window at the sea, I employed myself by jotting down details in my new little notebook: I chose first the Sopa de Mariscos, thick with shrimp and all manner of

seafood, then followed it with Fritas Malagüeñas—a mixed fish fry that should have served for my entire meal, featuring (I pointed and asked) heaps of fried sardines, chanquetes, boquerones (crisply fried fresh anchovies, a local specialty) calamares fritos and cazón (which I later learned was shark). Imagine eating next a Tournedo Rossini: filet mignon, an inch-and-a-half thick and overlaid with a thin slice of baked ham surmounted by a ball of pâté. To garnish it there were mushrooms, french fries, peas and green beans. And every single thing so tasty and well prepared. To top off the meal, a little Manchego cheese, of course.

Needless to say, I slept all the way back to Málaga.

# # #

And where do you think I am writing from now? Early this morning I headed for Málaga's port and here I am aboard a ferry for the five-hour journey to Tangier. This time I mean to have a look at it if only for a day.

If things seem a bit disjointed in these serialized letters it is because they are oft-interrupted and laid down. Just a while ago between paragraphs, for instance, I had a lengthy conversation with a young Dutch boy over coffee cups in the cafeteria. He spoke such excellent English I almost thought him British. When I remarked on this, he responded only half jokingly that the Dutch, world travelers through the centuries, had better speak other people's languages!...they could hardly expect others to speak their impossible tongue.

I must mention to you also an encounter earlier on deck, for although brief it's kept me contemplative since. A most attractive young woman, early twenties, tall, shoulders and carriage of a model—high sculpted cheek bones and lovely slim hands that your eyes discover next. We talked for only minutes at the railing; usual things: the village backed by mountains on the receding shoreline...Málaga...Spain.

When I turned to leave to resume this writing at an inside table, I offered her the paperback I'd finished with, for I mustn't let myself accumulate and tote such things. "I think you'll like it," I remarked, and in exchange got the funniest look—quizzical, I guess? As though to say, Now why should you be thinking I'd especially like it, lady—because I'm black and it's about "my kind?" Not even by coincidence, however, did it turn on such—for which I thank whatever is appropriate—not Richard Wright on Spain, or Baldwin, or one of those Mandingo things. It was all psychological and woman...a Shirley Jackson and as usual engrossing, that's all my after all banal remark involved.

But this devastating self-consciousness (so often warranted, true) that all of us minorities suffer from! Yes, and make the other guy suffer for. Suspect again, no escape....Will the barriers between people ever fall, leaving us just people? Oh I am so excited I could burst! We've just passed the Rock of Gibraltar and on the left looms Africa as we go heading through the Straits. That must then be Ceuta, which together with the Rock, as I recall, make up the Pillars of Hercules. It's narrowing down and soon, according to my map, we pass Tarifa, southernmost tip of Europe. (Named, 'tis said, for Tarif ben-Malik, one of the Berber-Jewish chieftains who is supposed to have landed there in 711 with the Moslems to launch the Moorish conquest—first to land on Spanish soil.) We have attained the limits of the ancient world. Imagine—the African coast just a hail away—a whole new continent!—or a very old one, really. Never realized how mountainous it is...magnificent, majestic.

Now on a number of counts I must leave you, Mike. I must go fore, as we mariners say, to anticipate the ancient castle on Tarifa's point. And to try to identify the battleship just ahead of us, probably U.S., so many are. And because I fear I'm growing nauseated from the concentration, writing...or from the mounting pitch and roll of the ship the Straits have given rise to where all was smooth before. But mainly because I need to soak it up awhile in silence at ship's railing, this utter magic that my so impoverished speech emasculates.

Chapter Fifteen: THE CURTAIN RISES ON TANGIER

From the deck I watched my ship approach and then ease in among the piers. Watched the luminous white dazzle of the city rise above the harbor, burnished by the sun, to hang there shimmering. I stood at the rail on deck and slitted my eyes against the glare and sought Tangier's white essence.

The customs shed was white where it stood in the whiteness of the buzzing dockside sprawl. And white were the turbans wound about the heads of dusky men who swooped like vultures to a sacrifice as I stepped out, clamoring to lead me to the various white hotels they touted.

But I was prepared. Ransacking my shoulder bag. I came up with precisely the right slip of paper. Hotel Blanco, the obliging young woman behind the perfume counter had written in response to my query when the ship's information booth had remained stubbornly unopened to the last. 23 Calle Blanco. It was reasonable, conveniently located and perfectly proper, she had vouchsafed; she stayed there herself when in town overnight. Further, she had raised a cautionary finger, on landing I must ignore the many attempts to steer me elsewhere, proceeding directly to a taxi whose driver I must pay no more than five dirham, a dollar's equivalent, agreed to in advance, to take me straightways to my destination.

So that now, clutching my suitcase jealously and shrugging off several attempts to wrest it from me, I strode with determination toward a taxi....But was it a taxi? It wasn't marked and a villainous pimp-looking scoundrel was opening its door, reaching for my bag and calling out some unintelligible directive to the driver. I clung to my bag and shook my head in an annoyance surely recognizable in any language.

Then suddenly, as at the rubbing of a magic lamp, there appeared a good-looking gent of dark complexion with a well-trimmed pointed beard and suave demeanor. He wore a business suit and tasselled fez of dark red felt and a button prominent on his lapel proclaimed him an official guide.

"Good afternoon, Madame; may I be of service?" he inquired in immaculate English as he elbowed out the scoundrel.

With relief yet apprehension I explained that I required no guide, had come prepared with a hotel and needed only to secure a taxi that would take me there.

"In that case, Madame, you are fortunate to have found me!" and saying so, he drew from his pocket an impressive document. "I am an official representative of the tourist bureau of the city of Tangier and I am here to help you...with my English and in whatever way I can. I shall be happy to find you a taxi...indeed it is my pleasure!"

Well, let him have his moment of delight; but he wasn't going to find this innocent completely off her guard. Suspicion lingered as he summoned one of the massed automobiles with only the merest flick of his wrist.

Pulling to where we stood, the driver dismounted, opened the door and motioned me in.

But I wasn't entering, not quite yet. Extending the annotated slip of paper I demanded in Spanish, "Will you take me to this hotel for five dirham?

"Seis dirham," he responded promptly.

"No more than five!" I was adamant and still outside his car.

"Cinco dirham es bastante," my red-fezzed mentor backed me up, nodding to the driver.

"Sí, cinco," the driver succumbed, and I climbed in back. The Official Guide threw my suitcase in after me and slammed the door. Everything now seemed under control as I thanked him for his kind assistance.

Then he jumped into the front seat. Suspicion revived. "Señor," I leaned forward to assure him pointedly, "there is no need for you to come ...the driver knows where I am going."

"Do not worry, Madame," he brushed it off with a large gesture. "I will see that you get there. It is no more than my duty!"

And we were off, at any rate, into the white streets of Tangier. And shortly I was being regaled by my Official Guide with the advantages at a certain hotel operated by this charming friend of his...true, I had at the outset had another place in mind, but his friend's was right along the route...why not stop in just to have a look and then decide?

No, I countered firmly, we must head direct to the hotel of the little slip of paper; then, I added in a conciliatory vein, if that should prove unsatisfactory or without a vacancy, I might consider his friend's.

By the time this dialogue had been ground out three or four times with only minor variations, the car was pulling to the curb. A small stooped man emerged from the seedy hotel which a hasty glance confirmed was not my own, swung open the car's back door and laid hand upon my bag.

I jerked it from his grip, flew at those poor dishonest souls in a bi-lingual rage. Then, turning to the prime culprit, "Señor," said I in my loftiest grande dame manner, "you will have the driver take me directly to my own hotel or I will report you to the authorities!" Some threat. Whoever they were, they were probably in cahoots.

And so I was in time reluctantly deposited at my anticipated haven, and even in its extreme simplicity and noticeable lack of heat it was satisfactory to my needs and pocketbook. Desk clerk and chambermaid were sincere types and my room at the end of a dark hallway on the second floor had a private bath of sorts. Damask drapes of an exotic Oriental splendor framed windows that looked out upon a tiny balcony and down into the street, where the signpost at the corner, I could see, was in three languages, typical of Morocco's makeup: the French rue, the Spanish calle and in lacy Arabic script a designation that I had to take on faith.

Then I looked again...hard! For catty-cornered there across the street

another language joined the trio with a word, a symbol, seen around the world. In this enticing city where I had early learned the purchaser had best beware, the voyager look sharp—where women muffled to the eyes and turbaned, fezzed and hooded men were passing underneath my window even in this newer section of the town—familiarly, three Hebrew characters stood out upon the white of a facade, attesting the refreshments served within were kosher. A kosher bar...? Now how were the dietary laws involved? To resolve the question, the Cacher Bar Abramcito would likely have a Philadelphian as guest. But somewhat later in the day....Just now a persistent little voice inside kept niggling, "Come wiz me to ze Casbah, Macey!"

# # #

So of course I had come, muy pronto, dallying at the hotel only long enough to deposit with the desk clerk passport, travelers checks and the greater part of my wallet's contents. Only once before had I followed this touristic routine—in Barcelona—and then regretted it immediately, for without my passport I had been unable to make a vital train reservation after a special trip to the station, or to cash at the bank the travelers check I had remembered to keep out. This procedure, I had thus determined, was not for me. But Tangier warranted some caution, I now decided; here I must grip my purse firmly and traverse no dark streets at night; here my friends' repeated adjurations to avoid murder, rape and mayhem sounded plausible as they never had in Spain; here, in short, I really should deposit my few valuables at the desk. And here too I regretted it at once, for the heretofore charming clerk was riffling systematically through every check and fingering each dollar bill, franc and peseta as he tallied the amount. And at the open door of the tiny lobby, not five feet distant, stood several shabilly swathed and sinister denizens of the street, following studiously each slap and crackle. And when timidly I kind of shushed him and suggested that he put the stuff away, he only droned on louder and indignantly insisted he must do a conscientious job and have me sign.

Then, having signed, without a map and following where instinct led, on streets that wove and wandered I came off-center and somehow penetrated the city's lonely brink of cemeteries. Augmenting my confusion was the fact I knew not really what I sought. Only later did I figure out that the Casbah—a term used loosely by us Americans—was basically the ancient rampart fortress at the farthest corner of the native city, or Medina.

In time, befuddled, I made myself approach a woman wrapped entirely in white cocoon, the haik so many wear, her eyes alone permitted to emerge. My "Casbah?...Casbah?"...barely made it through and she pointed in a far direction. Approaching a sturdy tunnel of weathered stone I asked again, this time of two young girls returning home from school. Their dress was little different from that of children elsewhere, only a little shabbier perhaps; yet even so they must have been among Tangier's more fortunate, for already I had seen such stultifying poverty on every hand.

They motioned me to join their company and enter and before long I roamed the Casbah at the center of a group of youngsters and to the tune of much good-natured giggling at our various attempts to communicate; even those who claimed acquaintance with French or Spanish had as little or less than I. Our Babel composition changed and shifted as I lost my novelty for one or caught another's curiosity, or as we passed an opening in a blank white plaster wall and a child was swallowed up. Shortly we were joined by two young boys possessed of bits and snips of English. As we clambered downhill over step streets to another part of the Medina, importantly they pointed out Barbara Hutton's house, evidently a celebrated attraction but unobtrusive from without; since the Woolworth heiress was just then not in residence, we moved along. The group in time reduced by natural attrition, I was ready to stand treat to ice cream bars. At this, though I urged them to remain, the two young girls demurred and disappeared, wishing to emphasize, I think, that their friendly interest had not been based on worldly gain...Tangier's rough and tumble tourist industry being what it is.

Soon afterward I begged off gently from the boys' companionship to move at will and unattended on this my preview day of first impressions.

And such impressions! Such sights and sounds and smells as come bombarding as I travel through the Petit Socco and down into the Grand, the souks, or markets of Tangier. And this is Thursday, as it happens, when they are at their most dramatic best.

The stage is set: by the fish market, whose stench no words can bring to nostril, and whose marauding cats, darting underfoot, guard their every opportunity. By the fly-infested meat stalls festering with their pendant carcasses, the bloody corpses open to the street. The seeming acres of squash, garlic, pepper and tomatoes; red-gold giant globes of orange, chrome yellow lemons. Pungently arrayed in heaps of subtle color: saffron, cinnamon, paprika and the myriad other aromatic spices that together rate their own domain here in the souk. Hashish too is likely being meted out in the little paper spills—I wouldn't know it if I saw it. Stacks of fabric strewn about a terraced landing, mounds of clothing, cookware stands. Basket-laden donkeys being threaded through the swarming streets. Mint tea consumed from glasses at the bordering cafés and, wafting over all, the heavenly aroma from the charcoal grills where little sausages and shishkebab are being savored.

Against this backdrop slathered on in violent impasto, each impassioned squish an expressionist assault on every sense—against this vivid set undimmed by centuries of time and decades of technology, surge the crowds themselves, acting out extravaganzas.

Unveiled Berber country women, children slung across their backs or at their feet behind a counter, raise voices uninhibited and brash and hearty to challenge a quoted price or quote one to be challenged. The Moslem gals—how adroitly they manage with decorum to pass along the murmured news through face-eradicating yashmaks. Their liberated sister who effects a compromise, whose dark covering djellaba reveals a flash of knee-high dress beneath and high-heeled pumps below, the face veil still in place above, worn lower on the nose until she marries. And the men in diverse cloaks and robes and great variety of headgear, and only a sprinkling of adults in market and Medina generally who, like the majority of youngsters I encountered, wear Western clothing.

Variety exists in the market, too, in skin coloring and facial types: the Berbers, of European derivation, had long been in Morocco when the invasion from Arabia took place; and readily seen is the Negro strain that entered from the South.

I was taking a few unavoidable snapshots over near the mosaic encrusted fountain at the Grand Socco's center when the resplendent water carrier nearby motioned, did I not wish to record his bejeweled and tinkling brassy presence? By the looks of him, he made a living not so much by quenching thirst as posing.

Shortly thereafter, while rummaging about a stall of decorated pointed slippers, the soft babouche both men and women use, I became aware of a musical clamor drawing near. Along the street behind a home-made band a small procession strutted, each member bearing something proudly forward, conspicuously displayed. The

crowds were parting to allow their progress through the teeming souk, meanwhile admiring the oddly assorted items on parade, prominent among them a yellow plastic bowl and bright red plastic pitcher. This mystery play I could not fathom....

Later I would learn that the dramatis personae were wedding guests come bearing gifts—and wedding guests who rather beat their breasts, I thought.

Hard on their heels another traveling troupe confounded understanding. Half a dozen turbaned men in coarse black or striped wool burnooses rallied around a standard like a maypole one of them supported, its ragged strips of fabric billowing and floating on the breeze. There was one who beat a drum with real commitment and another piped a flute and taken all together they put on a very lively show. But the star attraction and the very denouement was he who whirled and twirled and pranced as though berserk—an astonishing performance! Yet they oozed such dignity and unfailingly were greeted with respect—and contributions—as they moved along to various booths and stalls and bystanders, plate extended.

Bursting with curiosity, I turned and found a young American who also watched and wielded camera. We shared our wonderment, but he could give no help, as ignorant as I.

These were men in from the countryside, I later found, and the funds they gathered would furnish a carpet for their local mosque on the occasion of an impending holiday. For the prayer rug is a big deal and symbolic in Moslem holy circles, undoubtedly a comfort where so much time is spent upon one's knees.

The real denouement, however, comes only now, as I restore the encyclopedia to its shelf. For, having commented above on the whirling one, I found myself humming the old tune about the girl friend of the whirling dervish—who, every night in the pale moonlight, while he was out dervishing with all his might, was giving him the run-around....And surely, I can see it now, what two ignorant Americans had been privileged to witness was a member of that religious sect hard at work. Had we followed the team about, we might have seen him whip himself into such a frenzy—some dervishes do the encyclopedia informs—as to fall into a cataleptic state.

##

"Usted es judío?" I ask from my perch on the high bar stool.

He nods.

"Yo también." So we are both Jewish. Where does one go from there? I order the local white wine.

He is ten years my senior, or maybe only eight or as many as eleven, strong featured, big of body, a man in whom, although the hairline has receded somewhat with the years, an appealing olive-skinned handsomeness has not. Nor have the male hormones.

His name is Abram Otum. In a voice husky with the countless cigarettes he lights from one another, he speaks a straight-forward non-Castilian Spanish that comes as a relief after the lisp I never did adjust to; thoughtfully he slows his speech for me and uses simple language. Communication is not difficult and the wine is good and soon I am unwinding from the impact of the city as we talk. We are alone in the dim simplicity of this small room at an hour when little sun penetrates the store-front windows and ceiling lights are not yet lit. Just five or six small tables supplement the bar, behind which a loosely curtained doorway gives access to a galley; it is through here he brings me a complimentary dish of tapas, green olives set off by a radish rose and later a plate that holds some bits of roasted meat...the dietary laws....

I am asking many questions and learn his family goes back in Tangier for more generations than he knows. There are two thousand Jews in town and fourteen synagogues...had been far greater numbers of both before a vast exodus to Israel; this is completely cut off now, not even mail allowed in either direction. Yes, there is a synagogue quite nearby and he can steer me there tomorrow evening if I like.

Regarding this last, I feel that I must level with him—adding in polite understatement that although I wish to witness the Sephardic services, I am not really terribly religious.

Neither is he. Then, leaning closer over the bar on folded arms, a philosophic seeking in his intelligent simpático dark brown eyes, he probes: "Por qué? Why is it then? Numbers of Jews visiting from other countries find their way into my bar. They see the cacher symbol and they come. They too inform me they are not

religious. Yet they are drawn to enter a simple bar with a Mogen David on its front. What makes it so?...Now why do you suppose?"

It isn't just rhetorical, not completely. Abramcito, the eternal Jew, brows gathered over questing eyes, fully expects me to further his colloquy, join in a dialogue, search out the answer.

And I, chances are more talkative than he will ever be, I haven't the phrases to be philosophical in....I can't pilpul in Spanish! Not only that, let me be candid: I do not know the answer nor yet the pathway to explore it. Frequently criticized as a cosmopolite, mostly I have rejected the togethernesses that isolate still other people and stand in danger of promoting prejudice. Or, compromising, I have said if there be bonds, well...they are of shared culture only, not religion. Yet here comes this man asking me the question and neither he nor I am endowed with a religion. And what Jewish culture, tell me, have we in common in our background? Language? Literature? Song, humor, food? Yiddish and Peretz are as little known to him as English and Dickens, and kreplach and potato kugel are delicacies of the Eastern European ghetto that I doubt he has enjoyed.

So what is my response? I look up at this very likeable Jewish bartender who comes in the midst of my new and very foreign Moroccan experience and blurt out, beyond all logic but in utter sincerity, "Es familia!"

# # #

The food was good. Although it wasn't what I knew as Jewish. The fish exceedingly spicy with cut-up vegetables to match, rather typically North African if anything. Economizing, I had ordered the blue plate special. Being brought to other tables sizzling, the preferred selection was evidently giant skewers of roasted meat—North African again—a blown-up version of the moros and pinchitos encountered up and down the city's streets.

I had come here for dinner on Abramcito's recommendation after asking him to suggest a good and inexpensive "típico" restaurant. He had questioned, "Which típico, Jewish or Moroccan," and though really I had meant the latter, I would seem an ingrate after what had gone before not to answer "Both." Then it would be well to visit the cacher one tonight, he had suggested, since it would be closed tomorrow evening for the Sabbath. When I had looked confused at his "en frente," he had walked into the street with me and around the corner and pointed it out a block away.

Maybe the food didn't seem particularly Jewish; there was a waiter in command however, though not my own, who did. I had the feeling, actually, that we recognized each other. Had he matriculated at Karl's on Roosevelt Road near Kedzie in Chicago, he could have been no more typical a Jewish Waiter. The restaurant itself was somewhat reminiscent of that other....I think it was the breezy informality that did it, with everybody visiting among the tables and knowing each other's business and the waiters by their names.

There were certainly dissimilarities. While in Chicago a newsboy might well have wandered in and circulated through the tables, here he was followed by a flower vendor, who cornered me audaciously as I ate, waving a bunch of undernourished carnations in my face. The little man must have been daft—or thought I was—to demand ten dirham for his mangy offering; eventually he dropped the price to four, but we didn't come to terms until a pert corsage of violets plummeted to twenty cents.

It was as the flower man left that I first became aware of the Jewish Waiter. How could I help it! A tall cadaverous-looking forty with lots of straight black hair and a disheveled dinner jacket spattered with cigar ash, he came dashing over, demanding in Spanish to know what the violets had set me back; when he looked only moderately unhappy at my response of "just one dirham," I knew that I had overpaid by merely half.

Next entered off the street two musicians with fiddle and flute. I would have been happy to drop a coin in appreciation of a pleasant interlude, but mine was the only table they bypassed when they made the rounds and I could have sworn the Jewish Waiter, now back behind the counter, still dour of aspect but additionally smug, had had his fine Italian hand in that.

I meant to finish up with a fifteen cent fresh peach, noting on the bi-lingual menu that melocotón in almíbar went for a steep half dollar...who wanted it, anyway, remembering how I had once been trapped in Mexico by the so melifluous-sounding yet common canned peach. But now in trying out my French just for variety, I neglected to specify fresh and when la peche arrived it was of the slick variety, destined to add a flat fat fifty percent to the tab. I felt I had been knowingly taken by my waiter, but to raise the issue would have been embarrassing.

Came time to settle up, the change he returned on the little plate held nothing small enough for the bare ten percent I wished to leave and felt was scarcely warranted; a search of my bag brought no solution. Again I felt I had been had.

Mine had disappeared momentarily, but there stood the solicitous Jewish Waiter at the nearby counter, looking interested and involved. I didn't have to catch his eye...the merest shadow of a gesture brought him to my side. He returned speedily with the change I had requested and, before I knew what he was about, had placed a coin on the offending plate and thrust it at my waiter, now lurking tableside. The remainder he laid in my hand, turning down my fingers over it with finality. When I left the kosher restaurant the one was looking daggers, the other muttering darkly, "Es bastante, that's entirely enough!"

Once through the door, still somewhat bewildered I relaxed my fist and counted out the change...to find that through the intercession of the Jewish Waiter I had tipped his fellow worker approximately one American cent..

I lay in bed that night and fantasized....Had Abramcito drummed a hasty message...sent it rolling through the streets of Africa?...Was there a guardian angel watching over me? No more was I a stranger in this land.

Chapter Sixteen: OF CHONT AND COUS-COUS

"Aha, it's you, is it! Haven't we met someplace before?" The hostility in my voice was surely undisguised. Seated behind the counter near the woman who had just handed me a map of Tangier was the man who had introduced me to the city. I could have sworn it was. It wasn't just the beard and fez; the shifty, disconcerted look in his lying eyes as I confronted my Official Guide convinced me this was he.

Hurriedly he rattled off a flood of Arabic in the woman's direction, then looked toward me with the shrugged shoulders of innocence. Butter wouldn't

melt in his lying mouth...nor a lady tourist stand in danger of being led astray.

"At the boat...you met me at the boat...you must remember that you did!"

"Madame," the woman interceded abruptly, "this man speaks no English. He doesn't understand a word you say."

Let it rest then...what would be the use? Cooly I thanked her for the map, this morning's top priority, and exited in haste through the official tourist bureau's door.

Continuing along the Boulevard Pasteur, I was looking for an agency with some information on a tour. This would likely be my last day here and I must use the time efficiently, not dawdle it away in the Medina and at a kosher bar.

A nice man booked me into a half day's tour that would bring me back in time for my appointment outside the Sabbath-shut Abramcito's, whence the young assistant would lead me to the synagogue—then I turned at once toward the Arab quarter.

Consulting my map I walked this time along the waterfront, where I could glimpse the port and its commercial bustle, turning at length to climb steep rugged stairs cut into thick stone wall.

Just that abruptly did I thrust into another realm—into a dead white-shrouded world where I alone set feet upon the cobbles, stirring them to sound. And moving now so swiftly I was almost sprinting down the middle of that alleyway so narrow that I scarcely could avoid the swishing of my skirt on either side against the white and crumbly plastered walls embracing secret dwelling places of iniquity, or keep from brushing up against the doorways of white slavers where they lurked.

Somewhere, somewhere this had to lead to where that trip-hammer in my bosom would slow down its staccato beat. Or at the least, please let it not be a dead end! And I trapped! So there was a corner—but at best it led me further into the maze of lifeless streets. Let there only be somebody here with me....Sing hallelujah! A child emerges from an opium den munching a hunk of soiled addicting bread.

"Socco?...Socco?" I question, breathless.

He points a grimy finger, crooks it once and points again, and really I am not far away, it's all in the knowing.

# # #

There were no trash containers at the corners here. Having recovered my wits a little and my equilibrium, I had made directly for a market stall near the Petit Socco and purchased half a small round loaf of Arab bread and gobbled it compulsively. Then headed promptly for another stand where the oranges looked and smelled so good I picked out half-a-dozen. I must still have been a little rattled, for I forgot to bargain. The white-bearded turbaned old man behind the counter was visibly perturbed when I handed over the requested coins without demur, but it was now too late for me to remedy my error. As I turned to leave he leaned forward over his wares,

clutched me by the arm with bony fingers, reached toward the used paper sac I had begged of him and plunked in an extra orange.

It was the peel of that bonus orange, the choicest of the bunch, that I now needed to divest myself of. And there were no trash cans at the corners. However, stashed against the side of a stall specializing in brightly colored hand-woven woolen beanie caps was a great pile of assorted garbage presided over by a hundred happy flies. I deposited my contribution as unobtrusively as possible. Then looked guiltily about.

Thus it was my eye fell on a jewelry store directly opposite with a name imprinted on its window that caused my gaze to linger. Standing in front of the open door and watching me was a young man. He was short and fat and wore a suit and soft brimmed hat. Crossing to where I stood looking caught in flagrante delicto he addressed me:

"You Joosh?"

I nodded.

"Shalom Aleichem!" His pudgy face creased in a welcoming smile as he reached for my juicy orange-scented paw.

Then he tried to sell me a necklace.

# # #

I was the only non-German tourist on the bus, since this was in effect a charter for the lively group that had crossed over from Algeciras for the day, the time most commonly afforded Tangier by package tours of Spain in which it is included. Solicitous of an odd-ball American's welfare, the tour guide had me sit close by, so that after giving the spiel in German he could turn to me with an English resume. This was great, because I was getting personal attention and could insert a question now and then. In addition, he was an extremely attractive person in his middle thirties with perfect English, a sophisticated understanding and a sense of humor—a pleasure to be near in the midst of all the incomprehensible chatter.

He was actually a very good and knowledgeable guide. The problem was the material he had to work with—the system—and the indiscriminate tourist who eagerly laps up its gross commercialism as contributing to the fun and games.

Riding into the countryside we passed through elegant suburbs with their walled estates and villas of important people, past relatively unimpressive Roman ruins set, however, in vast and lonely sands that bordered sunlit waters; I don't recall which waters—though they were surely salt—for somewhere on the way we turned the corner of the continent. This was for me a terribly exciting thing to do....A glimpse of Spain across the Straits at various points and visibilities, the magic sense of history, a laying on of pulsing flesh to the brittle framework I had known of fable and of fact—these things would take my fancy and my breath. As they were taken when, high on a promontory, we stood and watched the Mediterranean join hands with the Atlantic. But so jarring are the multitude of souvenir stands and hawkers and assembled tour buses that come between man and a blood-stirring view! Here one should stand alone and look below and then dream backward into time to when Hercules, the bastard god, with one gigantic heave of his Olympian shoulders sundered Africa from Europe and made the seas unite. Near here we trooped in unison through the Caves of Hercules, where for centuries millstones have been hewn from the rock and still are being cut. Then scrambled through openings in the cliff, playing tag with the hewers of stone, the ancients of Morocco and of pre-Morocco and the legendary heroes.

As anti-climax there followed the compulsory encounter between tourist and bedraggled dromedary of the African desert and the photo op that ensued. Were camels indigenous to these parts? I asked my Friendly Tour Guide. No others about for five hundred miles, he responded candidly.

And back at the Casbah....Where our group surrounded the greatly heralded snake charmer and his harmless garter snake, again wielding cameras.

Soon afterward, as we were herded through the streets of the Medina, I was shamefacedly avoiding the gaze of my little English-speaking friends of the previous day as they stood taking in the spectacle of a gaping flock of sheep led by the nose to slough off careless money,

Now, there are many thoroughly legitimate shops in Tangier where you can buy Morocco's handsome handicrafts, and I would in time discover a few myself. Not that there isn't a measure of gentle dickering that

goes on, but when you have reached a happy medium you've got yourself an honest value and sometimes a bargain by American standards. But in those places we were steered to, Take the Tourist was the name of the game.

We were in the last of the scheduled shlak emporiums, a giant of a bargain basement, when to pass the time I asked the price on a surprisingly lovely brass teapot tucked away on a topmost shelf. The man reached it down, swiped at the dust with the back of his sleeve and told me l50 dirham. I thanked him politely and walked away.

He came running after. "Wait, let us talk a little, lady!"

"There's nothing to talk about, I'm just not interested."

"But if you like the teapot, lady, I could let you have it for 125...that's only twenty-five dollars, and for a real artistic piece, a work of art. It's all hand made, high quality brass, and that's genuine silver in the decoration."

At that price it ought to be solid gold! "No," I repeated, "I like it very much, but I was only asking. I knew I never could afford it."

"I'll tell you what...you look like a nice lady, and I can see you appreciate something good. You I would let it go to real cheap. Just make me an offer and you'll see...."

I wasn't about to get screwed in this sucker seraglio. To extricate myself I tossed off a patently unacceptable figure, proclaiming it my limit.

"Oh lady!" He was cut to the quick. "Surely you must be fooling!"

The Friendly Tour Guide was suddenly at my side from across the shop where some of our party were considering purchase of genuine Japanese machine-carved back scratchers. He had dashed over like a Jewish Waiter and was rather shouting at me: "What are you giving him for that!"

"Nothing," I said soothingly, "not a cent. I offered twenty-five dirham and he wouldn't take it."

"Twenty-five? Oh, all right then....Why don't we move along if you're ready?"

Now tell me, wasn't he an awfully Friendly Tour Guide? Considering that he was certainly—by the nature of the system—cut in on everybody's purchase.

# # #

I knew my place in this scheme of things and sought out a flight of stairs and climbed to the women's balcony. The sun's last rays would signal the onset of Hebrew services, just as they would the muezzin's call to prayer in the Medina. Still early, I spent the intervening time in conversation with the young girl who shared the balcony with me. Fresh cheeked and lovely with alert brown eyes and short and curly light brown hair, she looked exactly like a thirteen-year-old nice Jewish girl back home. But the older women who shortly were arriving were of a different cut, more the aristocratic Spanish matron prototype than the women I had seen in Spain—so vividly could I envision the mantillas that they hadn't perched today on sleek black hairdos. On a bench best situated for the unobstructed view of where the scroll would be unrolled, the Torah read, was a plaque inscribed Sra. de Yuda Cohen—at least the name looked Jewish.

When, certain of the answer, I asked my young companion nonetheless if she spoke Yiddish, she had never heard the term and looked surprised. But she did speak fluent Spanish, French and Arabic and knew a little Hebrew and Ladino.

Later I asked Abramcito if Ladino were used by Tangier Jews among themselves, as my parents had spoken Yiddish, and he said not—that it was today again beginning to be taught young people, but I got the feeling it was rather an exoticism. He reached behind the bar for a small booklet printed in the language and I leafed through it as he served someone a beer. It appeared a calendar of events or holidays—something of the sort—and the characters resembled Hebrew.

Ladino, says Mario Pei in The Story of Language, is the dialect "spoken by the descendents of the Spanish Jews who were forced to leave Spain in the fifteenth century and who settled...along the Mediterranean basin...forming the so-called Sephardic, or southern Jewish communities. Ladino is a strongly conservative fifteenth-century Spanish interlarded with words borrowed from Greek, Turkish, Arabic and other Mediterranean tongues...."

Much, I suppose, as Yiddish is basically a fifteenth century German modified by many Hebrew words. To say nothing of being liberally inter- larded (but what a term to use!) with the words of the respective country where it is being spoken—e.g., on the telephone a U.S. Jew will likely say, "Hello, halt dem line, please!"

The intervening time having thus been expended in such a flight of scholarship, the time for action has arrived below. The men are gathered, some of the younger ones in colorful woven yarmulkes like those of the market place, everybody looking rather like a middle class Jew with the exception of one who could pass for an Arab beggar. The rabbi is a dignified elder statesman with long gray beard. My girl friend whispers that it is his grandson when later a youth about her age whose voice is still pitched high and beautiful fills several interludes in the shaking rhythmic prayer with solo song. He is not the youngest there, by any means, and the following day will bring a three-year-old of great precocity from whom I scarcely take my eyes as, during the first hour, he holds a prayer book, rises and bows as indicated and strains to kiss the Torah as it passes. So devout this child is! So devoted to mimicking each nuance of his elders, every jolt and tremble. In the second hour he begins, as children will, to run among the benches and the aisles and, as children are, is delivered to his mother's charge in the balcony above. Not,

however, until those sweet long-suffering cheeks of his have been soundly pinched and kneaded by everybody at the lower level.

The whole undertaking, in fact, has the light and jovial aspect of an old-time family affair, as though theirs is a jollier less wrathful Jehovah. Much kissing goes the rounds; when the rabbi busses both cheeks of the Kohane in appreciation of a passage of the Torah sonorously chanted, it is with sincere enthusiasm.

Yet the service is ceremonious also and perhaps has carried forward through the ages better than the Ashkenazi the romantic flourishes. Comes time for the silver wine goblet on a tray and there's a candle with it. Sprigs of greenery are passed about to all and crushed between the hands then raised for the aroma to be savored, as with a pungent stem of mint plucked from the summer garden—perhaps that's what it is, we're in Morocco. A dish of wine is circulated and the fingers dipped then touched to eyes and ears and back of neck in a symbolism that escapes me. An abrupt curtsey to the ark—and the chanting that resumes is so vehement, so overlaid with drama, that I wonder if in this very passage old Pharoah gets told off. One of the older men, in particular, brings to the doing such spirited shaking and scold that I fear he is encouraging a coronary. The chanting soars still more in anger, yet there is anguish intermingled.

Then, at Sabbath's end, the voices pound at the gates of joyousness and transcendental glory, till even the women seated about me—those whose traditional role it is to watch and be silent—even the balcony-relegated women sweep into song. Everyone shares at the close in the general hub-bub of happy release. The men file down the hallway to where I assume the kiddush awaits, of shnapps or wine or what is customary in this exotic white African temple of Tangier.

# # #

At eight o'clock Saturday night I filed into the Cacher Bar Abramcito, having spent the last two evenings at the synagogue.

I was up on the bar stool again, before me a glass of the excellent white wine and a little dish of food. Two men who hovered over me were explaining that this was a very special tapa, a traditional food served at the Sabbath's close. Adafina, they called it—and of course it was the chont of my father's youth that he always spoke about so longingly. They were detailing what I already knew—that it simmered at the back of the stove through the long hours of the Sabbath, thus allowing a good hot meal on Saturday night without the woman's having to cook in the interval when work was forbidden.

I was finally having an authentic chont. Sometimes, for a long afternoon away from home, my mother would put a chuck roast and vegetables into a very slow oven and call it chont, but though my father always was appreciative you knew he wasn't fooled....The potatoes hadn't melted down enough, he'd venture mildly, nor the meat disintegrated into threads. Well obviously, my mother would counter—in the old country who could afford more than those paltry shreds of meat nostalgia glorified?...and her vegetables hadn't had the very soul cooked out of them for quite the twenty-four hours.

These had, I guess, but the adafina was delicious: potato, barley, meat and hard-boiled egg (that I could ascertain) all yummied up together.

This adafina is the precursor of Don Quixote's olla podrida, or rotten pot, the long-cooking stew which in turn became Spain's ever popular cocido in its many regional variations. During the Inquisition, when one had to demonstrate by all means possible that he was a true Christian believer, the hard-boiled egg was replaced by quantities of pork—strictly forbidden, of course, in the Hebrew faith—and the ceremonial dish of the Jew became, in the pork-laden cocido, an easy proof of Christianity.

The adafina tapa satisfying whatever hunger threatened, I decided to skip the dining on this night and devote myself entirely to wining. I had, after all, had a filling meal that afternoon.

# # #

Two o'clock must have been an off hour, for I had sat alone on the velvet-covered low settee of an Arab restaurant close by my hotel and partaken of cous-cous. The national dish, cous-cous is a steamed semolina wheat cereal combined with various flavorful things. I had ordered mine with chicken, and the gravy that tied the vegetables into the other ingredients was spicy and just a little sweet. The food was very good, but it was disconcerting to have a four-man orchestra play for me alone, three attentive waiters hover close at hand and the veiled dancer go through all the flirty motions just for me. Then when the plate was passed to cover the entertainment, I was the sole contributor, my contribution bound to be conspicuous. Posed on the unaccustomed velvet, trying hard to simulate the ease of an Oriental potentate, I was reflecting that Thoreau had judged he would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it to himself than be crowded on a velvet cushion....Yet here with the velvet cushion mine alone I found the going irksome—the country bumpkin longing for the pumpkin.

I had enjoyed cous-cous the night before also, in a far nicer experience. The restaurant Abramcito had recommended for typical Arab food was on the rue d'Italie in the Medina, and when I asked him how to get there he had said, aghast, "Of course you'll take a taxi...!" Of course I hadn't; by then I was an old-timer and at any rate the way lay through lively thoroughfares. The Medina had on her languid evening air and the leisurely walk could not have been more pleasant.

Up the stairs in what was surely once a palace, I stepped into the Arabian Nights in superbly illustrated, gold-stamped, leather-bound edition. Moorish arch and pillar, finely decorated tile and richly colored hangings, incense and candlelight. A sensuous soft-toned elegance fluttered about the room in time to the wailing rhythms of the cross-legged musicians, of drum and tambourine and flute.

I was seated by a friendly maitre d' on a plush-cushioned divan it took some careful lowering to reach and when the lamb cous-cous arrived it was on a round brass tray which, placed upon supports, became my table. My waiter was helpful, suggesting the least expensive wine as adequate and later for dessert a typical inexpensive sweet. Ambiance, service, food, drink, music—I was extremely happy with it all.

Came the dancer, provocative in swirling veils and harem pants, bare feet padding and slapping, accenting each sinuous move. Certainly it was a girl...yet when she swayed a little closer I decided she was male. Women, says the Koran, must cast down their looks and guard their private parts, displaying their ornaments to none save father and husband. Since it is woman's role to stay put in the home and keep her goodies to herself, this young boy whose supple body had deceived me portrayed a female dancer. And brought to the act finesse and charm as he cast down his looks, all right—then raised them languorously in a subtle come-hither. In the piece de resistance he went through all the graceful twisting acrobatics while balancing on his head a huge brass tray with blazing candles and glasses brimming with hot mint tea. Not a drop spilled as, snaking down in an Arabian version of the limbo, he settled to the floor, his shoulders pinned.

Seated along the wall near me was a party of eight English men and women who were apparently not enjoying their evening. Much was made of what food might be ordered here with digestive immunity and later of being unhappy with the results. Unease underlay their scant conversation and when they spoke to the waiter it was in a peremptory way, as though ordering him to comprehend their English, which he continued not to. Morocco was the last bastion of their personal empire.

The bill, when presented at that table, was greeted with consternation; from what could be ascertained at my distance (compensated for by my interest), the anticipated total had been swelled considerably by extras such as cover charge, entertainment charge, and a fat service charge to round it out. I heard the head of the table grumble his calculation of twenty-five dirham apiece. And I quaked! A five buck dinner I could ill afford.

Then our waiter brought my check and it tallied in at a simple ten dirham—no extras at all. He saw me look my question and said something fast about everything being covered in my total, not to worry.

Now this was an Arab waiter, it was clear. So how explain it? Had some guardian angel, banging those African drums again, telegraphed ahead that I was coming? Or had the fact that I had spoken even halting Spanish with the waiter and acted somewhat human influenced this night's phenomenon?

Again, at any rate, I was all snugged up in that toasty warm security blanket as I made my way through the voluptuous dark in the cool spring night and got myself to bed.

Chapter Seventeen: AHMEDS AND MOHAMEDS

So here I still am, settled at the Abramcito having my traditional Hebrew tapa and increasingly a ball as I come to know those settled at the bar.

There are the two middle-aged Jews who filled me in on adafina and they are crowding me, left and right: I am, I suppose, a bit of a novelty here. One is fat and one thin and both are rather oily characters with whom I feel absolutely nothing in common.

He is a Kohane, the fat one boasts to ingratiate himself with me. Me too, I answer glibly to demolish him...on my mother's side: a kind of shaggy dog, for precious few Jewish priestesses have served the temples of the earth —leastwise prior to the advent of Women's Lib. And how exclusive can this function really be, in view of the endless line of Cohens and Cahans and Conns and Kanes and Kaplans and Coplans and Kogans and Kagans and how many more variations!...descended from him who is first to be called to the Torah on the Sabbath. (My mother, for instance, was a Kagan until some idiot clerk at Castle Garden converted it to Kaplan. Thus were many immigrants renamed, thus grew the roster.)

The others at the bar are Moslem—or Mussulman, as they describe themselves to me. They must be just about as devout as I, for the Koran countenances no alcoholic drink. They don't look Arab or Berber, North African or anything but just plain people.

Flatteringly attentive through the evening is Ahmed, a thirty-some-year-

old playboy type with a winsome air, good looks and naught save trivial conversation. He is a customs officer, he tells me, as are several of the others in the room.

The slight merry one, Mohamed, works for Royal Air Maroc and speaks a little English; things are easier for me with him about. He has a fiancée in New Jersey whom he hopes to visit soon and says he wishes to practice on me—his English, I assume he means.

One calls himself a Communiste and has some fine phrases which he reduces to pidgin Spanish for me. What is his opinion of the king, I ask, pointing to the picture that hangs framed on everybody's wall. Then I see I have put him rather on the spot; he looks a little uneasy and declares for all to hear: "Fine fellow, Hassan, a cut above the ordinary ruler." I inquire about a wife and yes, he has one. Where is she on this Saturday night? Why home, of course—she prefers it that way. And does she wear a face veil on the street? She would not be comfortable any other way—you see, she prefers....

I guess it is at this point I ask the classic question and it gets a chuckle from all within hearing; evidently they've encountered it before. Nobody there has more than one wife. By law however, they explain, a man may take four white and an unlimited number of colored wives. (The ultimate in discrimination!)

But who can afford it?" grins Camarade Communiste. "Only the very wealthy Capitaliste!"

"And whose wife will permit it!" moans a newcomer to the discussion in mock despair, leaving his stool to join our end of the bar. "Would you?"

Somehow the talk turns to Arab-Jewish relations and somebody explains that by law only Mussulman and Jew are born to citizenship in Morocco—Christians just don't rate. All at once everyone is clamoring, the two oily Jews included, how great a bond of brotherhood exists between them here in Tangier, no matter what the situation in the Middle East. But I sense unease beneath the hearty protestations: methinks indeed the brethren do protest too much. Not that I disbelieve their own sincerity—but since when does the nice guy at the bar determine national policy?

I am the only woman at the counter, but at a table sit two who are almost certainly women of the street. No one pays them much attention and before long they are off in search of greener pastures.

At intervals, back and forth through the curtain on the kitchen alcove moves she who I am told is the proprietor's wife, a hard-working woman some years his junior who in her youth was undoubtedly very pretty.

It is a busy night for Abramcito. Once when things become too lively he moves swiftly and quietly to escort the offender out the door, yet himself stays looking calm and pleasant—a performance beautiful to watch. Nor has he forgotten me: he keeps a supply of tapas coming at me by way of his wife or his nice young wavy-haired assistant, blotters for the good Moroccan wine. Things like peanuts in the shell and olives I pass around, for clearly I receive the major share.

One of the boys insists I have a glass on him, but then when shortly I insist on standing him a beer he doesn't understand at all—not where they use the yashmak to keep the female featureless. But Abramcito does and, nodding, raises his stub of chalk to add to my running score on the counter's inner rim.

# # #

Sunday found me still in Tangier and digging in for another day's adventure. The logistics were just going to have to rearrange themselves...lob off a few days elsewhere....I couldn't bear to leave Tangier just yet.

First off, no longer could I resist the Medina's little shops with their tantalizing ware. The native kaftans—ankle-length gown or shorter version, vivid with bright embroidery—I wanted one for me and some for others and in cotton they were not expensive. (This was the North African blouse the British Scusy Lad had come to breakfast in that day in Barcelona.) And there on a shelf of the small, attractively cluttered shop of the honest gentleman who was selling me the kaftans, appeared the selfsame brass teapot of Friday's tour, copper blossoms blinking wistfully from among silver leaves as they chased each other round its fulsome belly and ascended to its peaked aristocratic dome. "Buy me, buy me lady please!" the little teapot urged persuasively.

My previous experience had shown the ideal price to lie somewhere between the 125 dirham the sharpy had come down to so readily and the twenty-five I had offered that apparently he could not at all consider. Thus I was now able to open the maneuver scientifically and in short order, to the satisfaction of all concerned, send the teapot on its way to Philadelphia at a final forty dirham.

Emerging into the Rue de Liberté in the best of spirits, whom should I encounter but the two young boys who could speak a little English. At loose ends, they seemed inclined to attach themselves to me. So I let them—one hardly had a choice. They were likeable youngsters, and with a polished efficiency held off the occasional little ones who approached to beg for coins. Appealing as the latter were, had I once succumbed to the role of Lady Bountiful, I should certainly have been swamped.

Ahmed, somewhat the older of the two and possessed of the better English, was a bright and witty curly-headed, round-cheeked lad, already a bit of a hustler with an eye out for the opportunity.

Mohamed was lanky and sallow-skinned with prominent teeth, but it was a touching smile that revealed them. He was the shy one.

Now, Little Ahmed, as he remains in memory, is not to be confused with Ahmed the Playboy, Nor Little Mohamed with him who has a girl friend in New Jersey. As a matter of fact, not once was I to come across another Arab given name in all Tangier than Ahmed and Mohamed.

This is their turf, and well they savvy the terrain. To many dark interiors they lead me, urging me into an open doorway where the baker, dabbing sweat from his brow, turns from his oven and the rounds of dough that have just been shoved inside to smile and mumble cordially. Another opening, and we pause to watch an oldster peddle laboriously at a sewing machine whose years approach his own, and I wonder how, with those time-honored eyes, he can manage so accurate a seam in the gloom of that infinitesimal cell.

Tangier has evidently much small home industry, as well as the many crafts handed down through apprenticeship. One day when alone, entering the Grand Socco by a round-about route I had passed a smith at work at his forge and a weaver at his loom, each assisted by a child.

Now we are tracking to its source the sing-song hum emerging from a windowless cavern where some twenty boys of tender age all packed together on the floor are receiving instruction in the Koran. Little Mohamed, thrusting his giggling head into the open doorway, waves to a younger brother, upsetting the rhythm of recital and for this receiving stern rebuke from the instructor. As we move along, Little Ahmed tells me this is all the schooling some of the kids will ever get: not all will learn to read and write.

When we pass a mosque the boys have no desire to enter and I can do no more than peer inside, for entry is forbidden non-believers. This is not one of the five prescribed prayer times of the day and from their appearance I suspect those huddled on the mats and carpets just beyond the open door are poor souls needful of the warmth and comfort—an acceptable function of the mosque—and perhaps they lie in wait to beg for alms—acceptable as a practice.

My little friends are planning still another treat. Motioning to follow after, Little Ahmed glides across the cobbles to a door of splintered wood set in the shabby plastered stucco of a continuous facade. At his light touch it swings inward and he enters, looking about to ascertain I follow suit; Little Mohamed meanwhile is bringing up the rear.

Suddenly I find myself captive in the Black Hole of Calcutta...or is it only a narrow corridor black as the heart of that Official Guide, in the Casbah of Tangier? Where something tells me now I really ought not be. I feel myself urged on bodily, a small push behind, until a second door, already half ajar, is opened fully to receive me and I am thrust into a scene of shadowy loveliness lighted by the sky. A covered patio, is it?...a fleeting impression, that's all there's time for: a tracery of foliage overhead, bright carpets scattered underfoot, a luxurious divan in the midst...and a man's cloak flung casually across it as though he had entered only moments earlier. Now I know this cannot be a public place! At worst it is a brothel I have stumbled on, at best some wealthy personage's sanctum sanctorum. In any event, what business have I here! And my erstwhile companions, those rapscallions—now I discover they have beat a stealthy retreat leaving me to be thus encountered, holder of the proverbial bag. They are down the street awaiting me when I come dashing out and they are roaring with delight, swaying back upon their heels and clapping hands to haunches. In time the muscles of my face relax and I too think perhaps it's funny. Or at least another great adventure. For to how many American women going on fifty, tell me, has it been given to break and enter a caliph's house?

# # #

too soon, came an end to those enticing Tangier days. It was a wrench to pack my bag on Monday. I left it at the desk when I had settled my account and spent a last half-hour at the mirador just down the street. Usually you catch a glimpse of Spain on the horizon, but on this day the weather had turned warm and balmy, cloaking the waters in a glimmering haze. I would anyway be seeing Spain before too long.

At noon I was due at the Abramcito, an appointment arranged the night before with Ahmed the Playboy.

That had been another big night for me at the bar, with most of the prime characters of Saturday again in attendance. The Playboy had been increasingly attentive and, as the evening wore away, ever more insistent I take off with him to another spot—más elegante, he described it—with a vague location just outside the city. I had no need of it, I told him, not being so very elegant myself.

Once, when Ahmed had moved down the bar a little, Abramcito came over with a little plate that held a four-inch fish, crisply fried and curled up with its tail caught in its mouth. Setting it down in front of me he shook his head and caught my eye significantly and said, "He is very young, Ahmed."

Then the Playboy was back again, persisting: "Why won't you come along? There's nothing wrong with it, you know. I wish no more than to show you a bit of fun—only for a little time." But his practiced eyes were belying the words, making a very big time of it indeed.

That made me do it, I think, his mouth saying one thing and his eyes another. I should have known I always get in trouble trying on my non-existent French. But then I meant to shock, and was anyway somewhat in my cups already when, in a crazy scramble of Spanish with the phrase classique I contradicted Ahmed glibly:

"Unh, unh...you know that what you wish is solamente acoucher avec moi."

"Zounds!" he exclaimed—or Spanish words to that effect—as he gagged on his brandy and shot from the bar stool as though I'd given him a hot seat. "Usted es muy franca!"

"Yes, that I am; I'm frank if nothing else, I laughed self-consciously, trying to cover my embarrassment now that I realized the actual extent of what I had said. Too, I was feeling sorry now for the poor devil who was damned if he did and likewise damned if he did not agree with a woman that he wished to get her into bed. And even sorrier that my little bon mot—faux pas?— was probably overheard not only down the bar a ways but also well behind it.

Somehow the episode blew over and Ahmed and I were friends again, but next time Abramcito came around I picked up on his earlier remark and nodded, "You are right, he is very young, Ahmed."

Nor was it only the Playboy who was trying to get me out of there. Abramcito's wife had more than once tossed some rather broad hints my way about the entertainment at fancier spots about town, cabarets where Americans were wont to congregate in an atmosphere befitting them....Why not take in the night life of Tangier yourself, Señora? But I felt comfortable here, I would respond; those other places, they were not for me.

It was near midnight when I quit the bar, escorted across the street to my hotel by two nice men. Ahmed had departed half an hour earlier, saying if I wouldn't join him, why he'd have to make the rounds alone. Before leaving, however, he suggested we meet the following day at noon at Abramcito's; from there he'd see me to the boat.

# # #

Ahmed isn't there yet, but meanwhile Abramcito attempts without success to eke out from my odds and ends of stamps, postage for the very considerable letter to Mike begun en route from Barcelona to Madrid; only this morning has a final installment been appended. The post office, which earlier today I had found closed, is several blocks away. When I rise from my stool to head there, saying I'll return directly, Abramcito will not hear of it. He sends his young assistant.

My Playboy friend arrives. For the first time in our acquaintance he wears his customs uniform...he'll be going on to work eventually. He will have a hard time looking official, however, I am thinking. For the moment he looks nothing so much as disastrously hung over—positively shattered by the previous night's festivities. Yet, in his adversity, more appealingly little-boy than ever.

"Pobrecito!" I sympathize as he climbs onto a neighboring stool and the resultant jarring of his head causes him to moan. "Now wasn't I smart to have stopped when I did?...And what were you up to last night that brought this misery upon you?" I prattle on conversationally, knowing full well that is none of my business. But one has to say something and there is only so much I can manage except in English.

I am feeling especially affectionate toward him this afternoon, perhaps in the sentimentality of imminent departure, and continue fondly in this vein: "Usted es un burrito!"—saying (so I believe) what a silly little sweet old donkey he is to have done what he did and now be suffering for it so.

But Ahmed the Playboy doesn't consider my repartee all that charming. His face goes scarlet then turns quickly purple as Abramcito picks up the phrase and with it turns to others at the bar who join in laughing heartily as he declares in neatly pointed jest:

"El es un burrito, ella dice! Ha-ha-ha ho-ho-ho! Bueno, verdad! El es un burrito...y ella es una mujer unica!"

I don't take in all Abramcito says or how the word I used was misinterpreted until a later time when, pondering the incident, I realize what I have done. If inadvertently I've labeled my friend a jackass—why such tumult over that in the free-for-all of bar-room conversation? It's in a different idiom, Macey, is why, and subject to a different measure of formality. Oh, the pitfalls of pretending to command a language that you just don't know!—and chances are its nuances and social usages you never will.

For this the Playboy flushed so hot and then, for all time, turned so cold to me. In front of all his drinking cronies, for a handsome virile ladies' man to be marked a jackass by a badly overripe American tomato....

Now all that reaches me, however, is the phrase that falls so sweetly from Abramcito's lips. Una mujer unica he's calling me and it sounds good but I must know exactly. I flip through my dictionary helter-skelter.

"What are you looking for?" he asks from down the bar, accustomed to my gropings in the little yellow book. "Mujer?"

"No...unica...." I find it. Then know for sure I am a sole and solitary woman, unique in individuality, in one-ness. Made whole again. Not all carved up and stuffed in pigeon holes, de-personalized, computerized away. Not just a lump, a klotz, a well-digested fifty-year-old turd. Quite the contrary, friend, make no mistake! I am me! The one and only, a singular phenomenon: yours truly Macey!

Chapter Eighteen: A STUDENT IN CÁDIZ

Behind the cliffs of this enchanted coast of Spain a yellow moon is rising from the ocean, here on the Herculean Way the Romans knew. Bittersweet, the melancholy in me merges with the languor of the night. The movement of the wheels upon the pavement merges with the rhythms of a city still imprinted on my guts. On a bus that's bound for Cádiz, with ever sweeter cadence, comes tumbling out the music of Tangier.

Le gusta Tan-gher? you were asked in Spanish all the time. Or in French they prompted eagerly, Aimez-vous Tan-zhay? And I had liked it well indeed and answered honestly.

Liked it so well, found leaving it so hard that very afternoon when Abramcito, rolling down his sleeves and taking up his jacket, had followed me out the door. The assistant had come too, and Ahmed looking sheepish, and together we had stood, as I had urgently requested, for a picture in the sun. The taxi summoned from the corner had arrived and Ahmed, his ardor cooled considerably, had got his arm twisted lightly by Abramcito—over my ineffectual protestations—to accompany me to the port as he had previously planned.

Where the ferry ride between Málaga and Tangier on a modern one-class ship had been all but luxurious, the trip to Algeciras in second class was more like steerage, with few seats and many bodies strewn about the deck to be stumbled up against. And—this made the biggest difference—where five days earlier I had approached Tangier in some anticipation, it was in reluctant mood that I departed.

So it was with already jaundiced eye that I viewed the girl who, soon after we got underway, appeared at the counter where I stood sipping coffee. Thin and pimply faced with streaked blond straggly hair and a disposition seen to be disagreeable before she spoke, she was crotchety old lady at not yet twenty-five. "Gimme a Coke," she rasped and would settle for nothing else, impatient with the steward's lack of English and her favorite beverage, both.I had been making small talk with the white-jacketed man behind the counter whom I thought to be a Spaniard. A gentle soul, he maintained an even keel when she flounced away in Cokeless outrage. A little thing, but I had found her so offensive I was myself annoyed and, too, a little embarrassed over a fellow American. So I remarked, "She is not very amiable, the young woman."

He was a Spaniard, truly I had guessed, for he turned to me with dark expressive eyes and in a voice grown philosophical replied, "There come moments in a person's life when to be amiable is not easy...."

And so I knew I was once more in Spain, land of the soul, and it was exciting when a school of dolphin heralded our arrival, leaping so close you could almost reach to touch them, then diving underneath our prow.

Clearing customs in Algeciras was so lengthy a process that I feared to miss my bus connection. The long-haired youngsters got such a going-over as I had not seen before: surely a grain of "hash" could not have filtered through.

Having located the Cádiz bus along the pier after a breathless search, with only minutes to spare I learned the fare was slightly higher than anticipated. Through the on-coming dusk I sped two blocks to the official exchange to cash a travelers check, then back to collapse in my seat as we pulled away from Algeciras—away from its crowded harbor where I would have liked to stay awhile, with Gibraltar just across the bay and the lively bordering white strip of bars, cafés and small hotels.

Soon I am seeing Tarifa, for the first time from this view, wheeling up and past it from behind. In the night it looks a Moorish pile of giant blocks bleached white and I know that just beyond, an eight-mile stretch across the Straits, lies Africa again.

The road winds inland passing tall cork forests, through pines and olive groves made ghostly in the moonlight. Startled, I am jolted thoroughly awake as we come abruptly to a halt outside the ancient fortress town of Vejer de la Frontera. Following the others, I clamber off the bus into the winey mountain air to enter the simple roadside hut that stands alone at the curve in the highway. We besiege the kitchen, where a dark-haired woman herself of fortress proportions dips into an iron cauldron for chunks of pork that drip with garlic-fragrant juices, wrapping them into sizeable wedges of chewy bread. At my feet a mutt with prominent ribs and soft eyes stares up hopefully, then shares a little in my plenty.

Moving through the night...at our left somewhere I know Cape Trafalgar to lie, where Nelson gained his famous naval victory.

It is close on midnight when the bus steers under an imposing arch to breach the walls of Cádiz.

# # #

I noticed him as I stepped from the shelter that served as bus depot—a tiny room that lacked provision for checking my bags pending the finding of overnight lodgings.

A grizzled old derelict of a man he looked, shuffling along the street that faced the harbor in grimy white duck trousers and ill-fitting jacket of rusty black. The captain's hat that he affected, presumably once white, was lettered with the name of some pensión; from underneath its cracked black patent visor untrusting eyes squinted out at an uncaring world. I saw him try to corner a fellow passenger of mine then head for me, but in that shambling gait he never made it as I turned a corner.

When next I saw him it was in the same vicinity. I think subconsciously I even sought him out, my situation having worsened then by half an hour: blue suitcase and yellow bag heavier, the soles of my feet beginning to sting—and a heavy mist threatening momentarily to overcome my eyes.

In that half hour I had applied at any number of hotels in the center of town to find them filled and eventually, on advice of a sympathetic desk clerk, had started out for the most exclusive hostelry of Cádiz. It was further than anticipated and in time, unsure of a subsequent turn, I stopped a kindly looking couple to inquire, for despite the hour many citizens were still abroad, the streets well-lighted. They said to come along, they were going that way, but then the more we talked the more the probable cost of such a venture seemed to all three of us outrageously prohibitive. Thus the woman rested on a bench beneath a palm tree while her husband walked me back to a small hotel whose manager was his friend. All to no avail.

The happy Abramcito experience still so fresh, my next move had been to stop in at a simple bar, order a fino and carry it over the sawdust to a table. Here I would rest my feet, catch my breath, stop feeling sorry for myself and think things calmly through. But here I found a vastly different atmosphere, here was a whole other bar: the woman who ran the show behind the counter tight-lipped and stony-eyed, her husband intimidated, most of the scruffy clientele drowsily drunk at this hour and all of them likely believing me a scarlet woman—especially, I suspect, when I asked to be steered to a hotel.

What next, Macey old girl?...

Why, my youth hostel pass!...Except that if there did exist such a shelter in Cádiz, who knew where?...And how get admitted at this hour?...

Well...I would ride the train all night; the kids with Eurailpasses were always doing that to cut hotel costs. Over the sherry I consulted my volume of Spain's railroad schedules invested in back in Barcelona. That brainstorm petered out as I ran my finger down the column: nothing out of Cádiz until morning.

That still left the related possibility of spending the night on a railroad station bench. Extricating myself from the leering attentions of a sour breathed old wino, I pulled myself and things together, departed the cold-hearted bar and headed toward where I sensed the station ought to lie, retracing earlier steps. I was passing the bus depot when I encountered the Old Derelict again.

His speech was difficult to follow, strained through a sagging yellowed-gray moustache, harsh with some local inflection. While he understood me little better, the situation was fairly obvious and when he raised my bags and started off I set out after him. The significance of the pensión's name featured on his cap I never did discover: it must have been a relic of balmier days and he free-lancing now. I started out a little fussy, but as we applied to successive holes-in-the-wall and our failures multiplied, all my preconceptions grew less urgent.

Doggedly he persevered until at length, following him into a café I saw the burly man behind the cash register glance in my direction, nod and hand a key to him whom now I thought of as the Sweet Old Derelict.

The key unlocked an elevator cage and as the monstrous device creaked its tedious way to the topmost floor I was prepared to settle for almost anything. I was wearied to the core when we stepped into a corridor that ran along four sides of an open court, but some cowardly instinct in me had its way when the old man pointed directly opposite to where there stood four miserable iron bedsteads—open to the court and to the starry sky, open to the corridor, and open as well to the man in undershirt who at that moment was traversing it.

We returned the key to the neighboring café, then remained for a moment on its doorstep, unsure of a subsequent direction in a street growing shadowy and still. When at length we faced each other he was looking so forlorn I had to laugh. It was one o'clock now by my watch. I reached to relieve him of my suitcase but he held it fast.

"Pues, what will you do now?" I was beginning to follow a little of what he said..

"It's going to be all right...you mustn't worry. Just point me in the direction of the railroad station and I'll stay there for the night."

"The station? Why, the station's closed...long since."

It was my turn to look forlorn. The back of my mind had clung to that last mitigating possibility.

But what was to gain by two of us wandering aimless in the night? The man must have a home of sorts...and be feeling the cold in that skimpy jacket that exposed his skinny wrists, for the chill of a hopeless situation had settled on the city. I reached for my bags again and urged, "You go on home, Señor, I'll be all right."

"Pues where will you go? I can't just leave you on the streets alone all night!"

"I'll think of something, don't you worry!" Then I thought of something

—a brilliant stroke. "Come with me! I called out almost gaily and headed down the street, the old man in tow, and into the hotel whose sympathetic clerk had, not quite an hour ago, suggested that I try the top hotel of Cádiz. He was nice enough to phone at my request and ascertain they had a room for me. Then to phone again for the taxi that I now would settle for.

I turned to wring the hand of the Sweet Old Derelict, thanked him warmly and pressed some coins into his palm. From the way his whole face lit it must have been more money than he had seen in a couple of days. He wouldn't leave my side however, until ten minutes later he could hand my bags into the taxi after me and gently shut the door.

# # #

Africa begins at the Pyrenees, someone once said. Be it Napoleon or Hannibal or the author lost in history's miasma, I was understanding that old adage when, departing Morocco one afternoon, the following morning I woke to Cádiz. I had reflected too on that other bit of wisdom—to know Spain one must first know Africa, or something very like those words—when, sailing off from graceful Málaga I had come upon Tangier. Eight hundred years dominion over Spain by Moors—and with a civilization vastly advanced over the Christian society encountered there—would have to have left their mark; even in my superficial glimpses I could see the overlay as I closed the circle I had traveled, fleetingly, between two continents. The feel of Africa is there in Cádiz, in the domes and towers that rise above its chalk-white aspect, in the faces of its people.

I wake to realize, as I was too exhausted to the night before, that just outside my window pounds the surf. Cádiz forms the tip of a peninsula that swings about to cradle its bay and I find myself settled on the outer curve.

I wake impatient to be off, be one with the sharp white morning and its inhabitants, take up the inevitable theme song...

If I were a student in Cádiz

I'd play on my Spanish guitar, tra-la!

I'd learn what the best serenade is

And all the best tunes that there are...

...wring-ching-chinging it dry by end of day as I skim along the sea wall standing staunch against a heavy tide—plough through the city in infinite directions, discovering the ocean anew on every side. As I exchange good-humored handwaves with good-looking stevedores while I explore their ring-ching-chinging harbor. Roam white ribbon streets where slender houses project wrought iron balconies and glass-enclosed alcoves, with delight turning up on a signpost La Perla del Populo....Oh ring out ye bells! Trek through an indoor-outdoor market place that surges with vitality, buying up three-peseta packets of the rich red saffron that will season our paella back at home, and uncovering a stand where women queue up impatiently with jugs that get pumped full of olive oil much as a soda jerk squirts his chocolate syrup. Arriving at a beach I slough off shoes, dig toes in still-cool sands and shuffling on this way past players of ball and courters of spring sun I find a pier that darts into the water and comes to a tempting halt in a walled-in castle...where I'm eventually denied admittance by a pair of guards and when I'm halfway back to shore along that lonely sea-encompassed length, out of a wayside shelter pokes a grinning little man with fly undone—Ring-ching- ching, Ring-ching-ching!—unwarrantedly proud of his display—OH Ring out ye bells!—and my leisurely stroll becomes a lope.

# # #

Early that evening in my hotel's bar lounge the only others present are a British couple, old enough to be retired and well-heeled enough to frequent the best hotels (at least of Spain) as they spend their remaining years in travel. They look so very much alike, fair and long-jawed, tall and angular and stiffly straight-backed. This whole area is well known to them and when I tell them that I head toward Portugal they know it too and are able to fill me in a little on the sights of Lisbon. When I say that I will get there via Badajoz, the note this strikes is not of the events of the Spanish Civil War—which is what that city means to me and why I'm going—but of an also brutal earlier one, the Peninsular War that every English school child learns about, and of Lord Wellington, their hero, and their pride of one-time empire.

Chapter Nineteen: FERIA IN SEVILLE

The train I boarded would bring me to Seville in the middle of its world-famed feria; having overstayed Tangier I could not now avoid it. Much as ordinarily I would welcome such festivities, only an even mightier fool than I would tackle Seville that week without cast-iron reservations. I had tried hard to by-pass the city completely in its grandest tourist-swarming hour, but one had to make connections there to reach Portugal from Cádiz. And so I had set up these travel plans with care. As envisioned, I would have a three hour lay-over in Seville, then on to Mérida, arriving early evening. In the event I could not squeeze aboard that train—remembering Valencia following Easter Week!—why I was sunk, that's all.

But now I put such problems from my mind and looking out the window I could shortly, for the first time, get an overview of Cádiz. She sat there resting in the water, a compact gem of white, an opaque diamond, her many facets sharpened by the early sun.

Sharing my compartment was a portly man who parted his hair in the middle and seemed inclined to ogle—or perhaps it was just the European stare. When at length the conductor came to check our tickets and my passport made me out American, the door was opened to some negligable conversation.

We stopped at Jerez de la Frontera, where the sherry comes from. A swift glimpse of murals in tile filled the station platform with the story of the city's liquid gold.

Soon afterward our compartment had another visit from the trainman,

who evidently was acquainted with the portly man and had no pressing duties at the time: despite the feria this early train, at least, was little crowded. He sat and stayed awhile and talked, and before long I found myself included in the conversation.

In time I would get to know him better, but my quick assessment of him never altered. He was salt-of-the-earth, this Seville Conductor, a kind and gentle Andalusian, yet not uncomplicated. To describe him physically is difficult, for everything about him was so medium—height, build, coloring, features—so much a camouflage for the man inside. If only he wore a beard or stuttered! But his trainman's hat and jacket only added to his anonymity. His eyes—yes, they were very good and I think that I might tell about his eyes a little. Frank and bright and quick...quick to laugh, but quick to weep in sympathy. Involved with mankind, but also with the man. In their depths lay a dream, but to reach it you passed through a layer acknowledging life's practicality, and with it all, those eyes of a medium brown held the Spanish male vitality.

The conductor was interested in learning English and for this purpose kept a little notebook in an inside pocket. Here he would jot down words and phrases garnered from passengers, to be studied later in his free time. He had a language sensitivity that made talking with him easy: as I paused to find a Spanish word he would sense what I was after and supply it. Or throw in at times an English word remembered from his notes.

Encouraging him, I said generously at one point, "You probably possess as much English as I Spanish, but I of necessity am using my Spanish all the time—and this is what is most important."

"But Señora," he replied, "I am tímido...whereas you are valiente."

"Verdad..." I laughed, "perhaps I have more courage," thinking that where I come from the word is chutzpah.

Leaving the compartment as duty demanded, he would return in short and comfortably we would pick up again where we had paused.

Once, when my neighbor had turned to his newspaper, the conductor asked him for the latest on the astronauts. I was completely taken aback! What astronauts...where astronauts? The world, you see, was no longer too much with me—even the moon had fled my orbit. Since the Time Magazine fiasco in Madrid I hadn't read a word of news. When my girl friend of the synagogue balcony had asked me jokingly if I knew the astronauts—I being from the USA—I had assumed she was raking up old lunar exploits. But no, Apollo 13 had been up there for awhile and its hoped-for safe return in doubtful circumstances was taking over the headlines of the world, exciting everybody in it except me.

Talk of the astronauts led to an interesting observation by the conductor in a subsequent discussion of the relative merits and possibilities for expression in our respective languages. I had just cited as a lack in the Spanish (some expert!) the word "su" having to serve for "your, his, her, its and their"—when he pointed out that, although the US led in lunar exploration, our English had not kept pace: we had no specific words for the concepts of moon landing and earth landing...while in Spanish these could be described succinctly with "alunizage" and "aterrizage."

The talk moved to age and there got invoked many of the hoary maxims and bromides surrounding it: only as old as you feel, its relativity, best time of life, and so forth. The conductor had just turned fifty, the portly man was fifty-one and I, with my birthday over a month away, was the baby of the bunch, they said. (Some baby!...but it was amazing how young and vigorous I was feeling.)

# # #

He had worried about what to wear and then returned to the compartment out of uniform and in dark gray cardigan sweater, still unhappy not to have a suit on hand. His hair was newly slicked and shiny and I assured him he looked wonderful.

I myself had taken my suitcase to the washroom down the corridor and extracted a string of beads. Looked in the mirror and brushed my hair and freshened the color on my lips. Like a sweet young thing in anticipation of a date.

Seville was bright with April sunshine. Fleecy puffs of white in carnival mood chased each other about a sky intensely blue and vibrant. For the first time on this trip I ventured jacketless into the streets, the warmth caressing my skin through the thin stuff of my gray and yellow print.

How choose a more glorious day for returning to Seville!—even if only briefly. And with an Andalusian as Feria companion. For when I had asked if the fair grounds stood near the station and how to reach them, the conductor had communed with himself gravely for several moments, then, the problem attacked rapidly from every angle and all objections overcome, had said decisively, "I have a few hours before my next route and if you would permit I should be happy to show you a little of the fair." While I was hardly in the habit of being picked up, so was he clearly not in the habit of approaching. With gratitude I accepted.

It was the Parque Maria Luisa we came to now and it brought memories of a ride with Mike three years earlier in a horse-drawn carriage. Today the grounds were decked out for a holiday, festooned with bunting streamers and balloons and hung with Japanese lanterns. Lining boulevards and pathways stood gaily red-and-white-striped tent pavilions, the casetas I had always read about where families—of a certain class only, I would think—camp out for the duration, entertaining guests with open hand and carousing day and night. Many we were passing, however, seemed rather to be public eating places, set out with a crowd of tables ringed by chairs as though awaiting clients for refreshments. The conductor was apologizing for the lack of local color—eleven A.M., understandably, was hardly the height of Spanish festivities—but there was enough to keep me happy even in the early stirrings of another day's carouse.

I was inclined to rush into the thick, seize the Feria by whatever handle offered, but my friend had evidently done some hasty reckoning how best to entertain me and was delaying the livelier aspects for a later hour.

He led me first to the grounds of the attractive palace-like structure I remembered driving past that other day (actually a remainder of an exposition). Tiled bridges arching Moorishly over its lagoon made loitering delightful; but positively enthralling was the series of alcoves bordering the palace's approach—each relating in pictorial form, beautifully executed in tiles, the history of another Spanish province. I could have spent a

lingering hour with them happily, but by the time I had quickly explored three or four I could see my escort waiting for me on a little bridge, already pointed toward the next attraction.

This is the thing about teaming up in travel. You cannot do exactly as and when you please and lose yourself completely in the moment. It has, however—as with teaming up for life—its own compensations.

I could pore over tiles and folklore and geography another day or in another year immerse myself in Andalusian custom. But if I could come to know this genuine human being of a Spaniard even a little in these bonus hours...why that was the very best I could achieve from this Feria of Seville.

So I followed him promptly down the wooded lanes he chose and then, our gait relaxed by wandering through the freshening springtime, to a bird island somewhere in a pond to which we crossed by rustic wooden bridge.

It was there, I think, that we started talking of our personal lives and families. We continued as we made our way back to the broad gilded strip. Through girls of various generations who bobbed along in a sea of billowing traditional flamenco ruffles. Past caballeros in their starched and frilled white shirts, trim black vests and stiff-brimmed Cordovan sombreros, posting their gaily caparisoned proud steeds. Past their ladies following after, riding side-saddle, exquisitely tailored in aristocratic riding habits, long black skirts, sombreros to match their own, red rose tucked, perhaps, behind an ear. By the time we had settled in a little grove of tables to the side from where the passing parade, now beginning to intensify, could be observed...by that time he was confiding the problem uppermost in his mind.

He had asked if I would join him in a beer and not being a beer person I had settled for a Coke. Somehow I had acquired in my own mind a role with this man which a soft drink suited better than would wine. Having had no breakfast, however, I was rather gobbling the olives he had ordered for a tapa, thus nibbling away perceptively at the genteel outlines of my own design.

"It is what plagues us night and day, my wife and me." The conductor spoke with intensity as we sat facing one another in our pleasantly shaded corner. Once started, he was as though lashed and driven to proceed, to pour into fresh ears that would soon be gone forever with his story what his wife and he were all talked out about. She was the apple of his eye, this daughter, I could see. "Our youngest, twenty years is all she is....Until just recently she lived to dance and sing, a merry creature. Joyousness surrounded her; laughter remained to echo in the room that she had left...." My poetic companion peered down at the neglected head of foam, seeking in its illusion to hold fast a fading image. "Everybody loved her. The boys all sought her out....why, she could have had her pick...." He sighed and his eyes turned hopeless. "Next month she marries a man of forty, a widower with two young children. Today she is solemn and withdrawn, a different person. It rends the heart! And we must sit there doing nothing. She says she loves him...and truth to tell, he seems a good and decent man... Quién sabe? He raised an uncertain shoulder, then gazed back into his beer reflectively; the illusory foam had fled and now the crystalline amber depths revealed no future, held for the loved one neither fulfillment nor yet defeat. "But from a carefree girlhood to come—in just one leap!—into such responsibility! We fear the outcome...we tremble for our daughter!" The utter universality of man's problems! I might have been hearing this outpouring over the coffee cups back home from one of the girls. And what could I say now to comfort this very sweet guy?

"Es la vida, mi amigo...." The phrase came easily, the simplest kind, but neither of us thought it glib or crass. We sat and nodded at each other philosophically over the beer and Coke as, with absent mind, I saw go prancing by in the background a team of six fantastically plumed and outfitted horses hitched to an elaborately decorated coach. "We did exactly as we pleased....Did we defer to our parents' opinions? Now comes our children's turn...and in another small moment our children's children's. Claro, in these matters one sits there doing nothing—there is nothing to be done, hay absolutamente nada! It is life," I repeated, not even feeling melodramatic.

He nodded agreement, then commented thoughtfully, "This thing has come between my wife and me. Once we understood each other well, but that has altered. What should bring us closer is forcing us apart...why, I do not know. It is strange that this should happen."

"Perhaps it is not so strange at all. There is a change coming in your life together...already it is changed, the household ambiente different. But you will understand each other soon again—for you are an understanding person."

The conductor sighed. He glanced at his watch, then signaled the waiter and settled the account. I tended to the last of the olives as we rose.

We were headed back to the station to retrieve my belongings from the employees' room where they'd been stashed, but detoured briefly: he must show me and take another quick admiring look himself at the oil painting whose purchase he had for some time been considering. The whole collection propped up on the sidewalk at that corner I considered crude and ugly, but his particular choice—a sentimental composition of palm trees, doves and a pair of lovers in traditional flamenco attire—was especially garish with harsh greens that glistened in the sun and tired the eyes to look at. The saving grace was that he did not ask me outright my opinion—there were no two ways about it, it was beautiful, he knew.

We resumed serious conversation as we walked on. "And how are things between you and your husband?" he asked. We were intimate enough by now...he had the right. "I imagine he is very happy with you."

"I hope so," I shrugged diffidently, thinking to answer modestly and in brief.

It seemed to miss fire however—as my simplest foreign observations had an unexpected way of doing—for again he responded with a philosophic nod. "Yes, marriage is not an easy thing. How can it be, when you take two separate souls—think of it, dos almas!—and try to weld them into one. An almost insurmountable task!..."

Let not some hard-nosed friend instruct me now that the Spanish soul is a romantic nonsense tale! Who but a Spaniard could have used that phrase? Or thought in such terms?...Think of it, dos almas!

We collected my coat, suitcase and the yellow leather bag still bulging with the miscellany of Morocco. Considerable time remained, but I would have to travel across town to depart from another station.

We were ready to leave the employees' room for the taxi stand when he handed me his card. Examining it, I realized for the first time that he lived in Cádiz, and remarked the fact. "Yes," he said. "What a shame we didn't meet while you were there. But now, when you return one day..." he pointed to the street address in the lower right-hand corner, "esta es su casa—this will be your home in Cádiz."

Oh how I could have used one on my first night there!...

"I shall remember this day always," I told him as I prepared to enter the waiting cab. But it sounded stilted. It was hard to find the words I needed fast...."Mucho," I added lamely.

"Y yo muchissimo!" he responded with a gallant fervor.

I felt the urge to kiss him on both cheeks, but crowded in a nearby doorway watching the show with overt interest stood a sizeable array of his fellow workers. I shook his hand hard, then called out "Buena suerte!" as we drove away—"Good luck, Señor!" I did permit myself to feel a little sad and with a philosophic nodding murmured inwardly, "Es la vida....We are but ships that pass each other in the night!" This being Spain, I was entitled.

Chapter Twenty: ADVENTURES IN ESTREMADURA

It is an arid rock-strewn plain that follows Andalusia's lushness. Land that takes the heart from men who try to force a living from the barren soil and dashes it against the nearest boulder, takes their buoyant youth and grinds it into the pervasive dust.

Small wonder it was from Estremadura that Spain's conquistadores came—fled is the better word. What did they stand to lose in uncharted wilderness? Fashioned by the cruel terrain that bred them, they came well suited to their task.

I stood in the corridor and watched it flash by. Fascination fed upon its very monotony, its grimness warranted respect. Separated from the railroad bed by a barrier of piled-up stones, a shepherd boy yearned toward the speeding train from the middle of his flock. He was ragged and barefoot and wore a floppy hat to shield him from the blazing sun.

The land was beginning to slope a little, its severity eased by the silvery sheen of an olive grove, when I was joined by the uniformed young man who for some time had been lounging at a window slightly down the aisle. Crushing his cigarette underfoot, he comes to visit. A gangling youth, so thin, his chest so concave, I figure the army must have had trouble fitting him with a uniform: he has had, indeed, to settle for one that rather gapes and hangs in spots. His skin is bad, a carry-over from a not-too-distant boyhood, and a prominent Adam's apple bobs beneath an indeterminate chin. The hank of undisciplined dark hair that hovers crazily over one eye sets the tone for the insouciance that I quickly sense is the major component in this lad's make-up. He is not so much devil-may-care as not possessed of the faintest notion what to care about if suddenly one day it should occur to him to do so.

In tolerable English he asks if I speak the language, but that first easy phrase is misleading. He was given a three-month Berlitz course upon entering the service, he explains, but has used his English little in the interim. We talk in Spanish.

"Is New York very beautiful?" he asks almost at once.

"No, not very. Hardly at all," I have to answer.

"But Philadelphia, where you make your home...surely it must be wonderfully scenic."

They both have other attributes, I tell him.

"I would like to come to America to live." He is a little boy perched on Santa's lap at Gimbels, asking for a bicycle. "Even Philadelphia..." settling for the stripped down model as necessity demands. "Is it easy to find work there? Are the wages very high?"

Earlier I had understood him to say he was being mustered out of the services and on his way home, so it is understandable that even with his lack-a-day temperament he should be looking toward the future. And in the village he comes from, he has said, there are few jobs to be had that he would relish.

Well, he is rather a sweet kid and in this connection eager, even though not particularly bright, so I tell him if he really wants to live and work in Philadelphia, perhaps my husband and I can help him get a job. But, I add, I don't know the prognosis for leaving Spain and then for being admitted to the United States to work. Such matters he will have to explore himself. And how about money?... he will need to save up lots of money for the trip.

"Yes, I understand," he nods enthusiastically.

I invite him into the compartment which I share with a friendly young Spanish woman, so that we can be seated, the better to exchange the necessary information. The woman looks startled as we enter; he gives her his crooked smile and she nods curtly, then busies herself with a magazine.

When he hands me the slip of paper on which he has noted his address I'm given quite a jolt, for his barracks bear the name of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, of which I never have been fond.

In further conversation I attempt to clear up the hazy areas and it seems he isn't finished with his stint of service after all, but has two years to go! I

must have misunderstood completely what he told me earlier....What sense does it now make to be thinking of a job abroad? This whole young man, I am beginning to feel, makes little sense at all!

I ask if he was drafted or has volunteered. At this my lady friend across the way looks up at me strangely, as though questioning my senses.

He joined up, he says, for a three-year period.

"Why?" I ask, since he seems so eager now to be done with it.

He grins up at me cagily and taps two fingers into his cupped palm in the money gesture.

"Just for the money?" I persist.

Then in a voice suddenly loud and self-consciously stagey, "Oh, I like the work!" says he. He fingers the red insignia on the collar of his ill-fitting dark green uniform, puffs out his narrow chest and crosses thin legs in burlesque of the prominent citizen, adding in a slightly lower tone, "This is of consequence too....Tell me, doesn't my uniform impress you?

"No," I reply, "I don't like uniforms, armies, wars or anything of the sort—not in the USA or any other country." Since I am speaking in my extremely limited Spanish, this comes out very bald and elemental.

I see the woman on the opposite bench snicker briefly, then straighten out her face and retreat again into the magazine.

We talk some more about a job and what kind of work he would like to do. I ask about his experience and he says he did nothing earlier but go to school. Of course...he can't be more than nineteen or twenty.

He asks what kind of work might be available and offhand I reply, "Una fábrica de textil, por ejemplo." It comes readily to mind and I can figure out the Spanish for it.

"Oh no!" he says loudly, "I do not think I am interested." Well, if to work in a factory is beneath his dignity...tough titty!

Despite his words however, he takes my address eagerly, asks when I expect to be back home, then assures me he will write come August. We are nearing a small station where he must leave the train, he says.

Oh, is that the village where you live?"

"No, there I await the train back to Seville."

Try to make sense of that! I am mystified why he should have made the trip at all.

He ducks into the adjoining compartment and shortly reappears in his hat. His three-cornered patent leather hat!

The train is slowing to a stop. Three of his cohorts from next door pause at my compartment to stare stony-faced within. Except for the hats, they look like something out of an old Erich von Stroheim movie. One of them barks at their misfit of an ugly duckling brother guard a Spanish "Stop shooting off that irresponsible mouth, you clown, und heraus mit dem!"

The youth grabs my limp hand in farewell. "They are always so serious and gloomy, those others;" he turns down his mouth in mimicry. The train stops and the oddball Guardia Civil is down the aisle and off, his final words to me, "Don't worry, you will hear from me in August!" And I will, indeed I will.

# # #

The young woman, a likeable brunette in her late twenties, tall and rather plain, saw I had had the wind knocked out of my vulnerable sails and smiled in ready understanding.

Shaking my head ruefully—the credibility gap not quite bridged—I muttered, "A Guardia Civil...!" Then the laughter burst from me as from a ruptured dam, uproariously and completely out of control. In another moment the tears began to flow, to join the flood, and fearing to activate still other sluice gates, I groped for a tissue and dabbed at my eyes, breathed Oh dear me! and slid peremptorily to a stop.

"But why do you suppose they got off and headed back to Seville?" I asked as soon as I was able, befuddled still by what had happened.

"They were doing guard duty on the train. Had we watched, we would have seen another group board at the station to replace them." She spoke, as always for me, slowly and with care.

“Well, whom were they guarding? Is there someone special on the train?" Beginning to figure it all out, I played a little dumb (or rather, dumber) to prompt her to elaborate.

"Not guarding anybody special," she explained with a kindly patience. "Just here in case of trouble. Every train carries its contingent of Guardia Civil. Often they will check on passengers routinely," and she showed me the identification card all Spaniards are required to carry. (Andrea too had shown me hers, I remembered.)

Now that I thought of it, I had often encountered uniformed men on trains. But when they wore no tell-tale hat I never realized who they were. They were with us, in fact, in the diner of the train to Madrid that night and being studiously avoided by the Saragossa medical students who were otherwise so friendly and open. Then too I had thought them soldiers and seeing them had asked the boy seated at my table whether Spain had military conscription. He had lowered his voice carefully and said yes, and that as a student he spent his summers at an army camp. (Andrea had mentioned spending college summers in a governmental social service of some sort—working in an institution—which Spanish girls were drafted into in lieu of the military.)

The young woman was bound for Caceres, her home, a short distance beyond my stop, and was well acquainted with Mérida. Asked about hotel possibilities, she recommended its national parador and the Emperatriz. Both, she acknowledged, were de luxe and expensive, but she thought them worth the difference and at any rate knew of no others.

I had thrown my budget overboard in Cádiz (unavoidably—goodness knows I tried!) and Tangier had not worked out rock bottom either. While seven dollars was the daily limit I should average, I knew if I were to afford France, Italy and possibly Vienna, Spain was the portion of my trip I must try hard to hold to five....Yet in Cádiz my room alone had come to that. In small towns off the beaten track it should be easiest—a little discipline was called for, that was all.

As we talked she drew a wrapped sandwich from her handbag and, making as though to break it in half, invited me to share it—an offer that I knew was de rigeur. Firmly I refused, over the pathetic objections of my empty stomach. Had she had two sandwiches I would have been persuaded, for there was no diner on the train with still a while for me to go.

# # #

She mumbled her way into our compartment at a station stop half an hour short of Mérida, bearing a black cardboard suitcase and bulging black cloth shopping bag. Hoisting the case onto the shelf overhead, she arranged herself ceremoniously on the bench across the way, her black coat still about her, crowding my companion.

Once settled, she reached into the shopping bag at her feet and drew from it an empty yellow plastic juice pitcher, passing it to each of us in turn for our examination. This she accompanied with an avalanche of speech, from which I extracted just enough to know she had picked up this lovely piece of pláh-tica in a fabulously wild bargain. Indeed, responded the young woman with friendly involvement, it was not much to pay for such an item. I nodded and smiled and murmured in my turn an innocuous Verdad!

She was of an uncertain age—sixty, seventy, eighty, only her mother would have known—no trace of gray in the thick dark hair she wore cut short and mannish. Sharp bright eyes encompassed everything around her speedily. Her face, leaner than the dumpy figure warranted, took you by surprise again as you reached the bottom of a high-boned cheek and came upon a mole that sprouted two or three black hairs. The woman radiated energy, the larger part of which got converted into speech—little of which I understood.

A strange quality, in general, hovered about this woman...in truth, a loony kind of feel.

In short order she knew I was American and had begun pumping the young woman for further information. Then, with the other as interpreter, she turned to assure me how very fortunate I was—need not worry any longer where to stay. She had this friend who took in boarders, lived right next door to her, in fact. A wonderful place, clean, even a bathroom inside the house—all the conveniences! And her friend, a fabulous cook, served such delicious food!

The mention of food made a direct hit. "How much does your friend charge?" I asked the Loony One.

For the first time she paused to consider before prattling on...."Oh, no more than maybe l25 pesetas, complete pensión. And such meals you will be getting...m-m-m, magnifico!" She brought her fingertips to meet pursed lips in the manner of the Count of Barcelona.

That gesture struck a nerve and a little voice within me whispered, Whoa, caution! But in stentorian tones a bolder one attacked: Well, look here Macey, turning chicken now? I thought what this was all about was to get inside, to come to know the people. What better way than by moving in with a small town family? That, rather than an impersonal—worse yet, palatial!—hotel. Then too, think of the money you'll save....

Withholding final judgment nonetheless, I began to fantasize about lingering on in Mérida in such an ideal situation, gaining real insight into the life and problems of the Estremaduran....If I were to sacrifice Portugal and a bit of France, I could afford my sociological explorations nearly two weeks—still covering Badajoz, a must!—then leave for Basel and the first of May directly.

We were coming in. Outside my window, in the sunset's afterglow the Guadiana River glistened a rosy welcome before flowing on to Badajoz and then to Portugal, and shortly I myself, if in my senses, would follow in its friendly path. We passed the Roman aqueduct of Los Milagros and were gliding to a halt.

"I'm not sure yet," I said to the young woman as I collected my belongings. "Tell her if I do go with her it will only be to look. If I decide against her friend's place, why I'll go on to the parador."

The message was duly relayed and, as we left the compartment, the old woman nodding vigorously and chattering, the response transmitted to me: "She says in that event she will take you to the parador herself."

Mérida was the foremost Roman city in the Peninsula, say its partisans, as others claim that Tarragona merits the distinction. It is agreed at least that Mérida was the capital of Lusitania, which included parts of western Spain with Portugal. Today it is a country town that serves as center for the cattle and sheep trade of the area.

As I walked it now however, paced by the vigorous Loony One, I thought of little else than to get to where we were going. The street was steep and cobbled and, weakened as I felt myself by hunger, my suitcase, yellow leather bag, shoulder bag and coat were increasingly a wretched burden. Her course quite as uphill as mine, she somehow did not seem to notice. She would greet an occasional passer-by, then drop a comment to me afterward, presumably of gossip, quite evidently glorying in the self-importance that accrued—to her demented mind—from having me in tow. When after several blocks I spied a taxi in the street, I set down my suitcase and abruptly called a halt.

"Mire, here's a taxi!" Let's take it to your friend's house...I will gladly pay for it."

No, no, she will not hear of it, much too dear...who does such things! We walk again.

When at length we reach the relatively crowded main street with its little shops, another element is added in the frequent obligatory stops at their windows to admire the merchandise. This at least provides a pause for setting down my burden and shifting it about, but the relief is negligable. My companion is inordinately fond of pláh-tica; she also admires shoes, plumbing fixtures, watches, overstuffed furniture and electric fans. At intervals she turns to me with proud-toned little lectures on how progressive is the commercial area of her town.

The situation has in time become intolerable and I suspicious. "Señora," I demand point blank, "is your friend's house just around the corner now or is it still far off?"

Oh, it lies in an entirely different direction! She has been showing me the town's commercial section.

Another suspicion soon begins to haunt. "Tell me Señora, since your friend is not expecting me, how is it likely she will have my dinner waiting?"

All I catch is the casual reference to...always...an egg in the house....

On top of a handful of olives and one tepid Coca Cola! growls my stomach ill-naturedly and kicks me in the shins, nearly causing me to stumble as we turn suddenly into a poorly-lit side street lined with narrow houses of a light brown masonry.

A woman with an appearance of great natural dignity opens the door in response to the Loony One's knock and the way she eyes her tells me I have named the old woman aptly. Reluctantly she bids us enter. I see a growing discomfiture in her eyes as a story is unraveled that I suspect places the burden heavily on me: no place else to go, the others too expensive, I begged her for assistance....In the neat though simple parlor beyond the little hallway my hasty glance takes in a man, a woman, two young boys; whether any of these are boarders I cannot know. I can tell however, that my would-be mentor is the neighborhood crank and that I am no more wanted here than I want to stay. Nobody knows quite what to do with me. Very awkward....I bring as much understanding into my eyes as I can and say to the woman of the house I see it would be difficult and not to worry, there is no problem, I can go elsewhere. She is obviously relieved. We shake hands and I get directions to the parador, dissuade the Loony One from accompanying me and am off again with my leaden bags.

Well, a couple of stops for additional directions, and I am beat by the time I reach the parador—to find there are no vacancies. I remember passing a small hotel behind a rose garden somewhere near the station. Groping my way, I am soon entangled in spooky dark streets, then lost somehow on a highway leading out of town. When at length I track down the hotel of the roses, it too is full. Wisdom follows soon upon exhaustion and I prevail upon the clerk to phone and see if the Emperatriz has a room for me before I make that trip.

The Emperatriz is an exceedingly lovely structure built about a roofed-

in patio where meals are served, and a room comes in at a reasonable 175 pesetas. Once it was the Palacio de Burnay and is today still listed among the town's historic monuments. It is constructed with Roman foundations and has a mixed facade of Gothic and baroque with escutcheons of nobility...says its description. It also has keyhole arches, magnificent stone staircases winding regally up past muraled walls that feature Indians and conquistadores, hallways that overlook the central patio and are furnished with handsome old carved wooden pieces, and simple yet adequate rooms.

I am in mine just long enough to perform a hasty wash-up. Leary as I am of the practice, I am nonetheless required to deposit my passport at the desk for the information that must be recorded routinely for the town's police.(Then neglect to collect it and am stymied the following day at a bank about to close.)

Famished, I am too shabby and exhausted now to wish to be displayed in the hotel dining room. Tomorrow, mildly spruced up I will enjoy being catered to in the patio for a carefully budgeted meal. For now, I want a lot of food that can be downed quickly and with little ceremony.

I remember seeing an informal little place near the rose hotel and speed the half-mile back in that direction. Informal? It is a dismal greasy spoon with a counter where several young men are congregated and an empty "dining room" at the rear to which I am referred unceremoniously. I have my pick of three fly-specked tables under stained and faded walls, wait five minutes to be recognized, then, relieved when no one shows, steal quietly away.

And find no other restaurant. Returning to the grocery store where a great wheel of local cheese in the window earlier caught my eye, I reach it just as the man prepares to lock things up, for it is ten o'clock.

Thus goat's milk cheese and potato chips, washed down by water from the spigot, provide my bedside supper. And rolling over I am shortly twirling to insidious flamenco strains as, sveltely attired in clinging gown of scarlet silk, I deftly kick aside the deeply ruffled train to circle round a uniformed Seville Conductor where he stands clapping hands in the palmado and nodding philosophically. At my left an oddball of a Guardia Civil is posturing in dance, hand behind his waist, a pistol gripped therein; grinning crookedly he clicks his heels and with his free hand doffs his patent leather hat to me and rises on his toes. Meanwhile from the right comes prancing into view the Loony One perched side-saddle on a coal-black steed, mole hairs a-quiver in the breeze, muscular pink tongue out-thrust, a red rose tucked behind her ear. Following her beady gaze, I note in horror that, ruffled scarlet flounce and all, I am sinking irretrievably into a giant wheel of goat's milk cheese.

# # #

The following morning, on stone rubbed smooth by untold rumps of antiquity, I sat alone in the crescent of bleachers at the Roman Theater. On the scene just beneath, a fallen god suffered himself to be hoisted into place

among the marble columns by workmen sweating and grunting over the ropes. The ghosts of toga-clad performers dating back two thousand years declaimed impassioned lines, denounced man's unremitting fate—their own—the golden lads who strutted and fussed and just as sure as chimney sweepers came to dust.

Elsewhere I saw richly patterned mosaic floors re-forming, scattered bits of colored tile returned to life from the dust that preserved them: pink naiads frolicking, a lusty Bacchanalia springing into shape and who knows what about to be revealed in a monumental jig-saw puzzle. Except for a nice old caretaker I was alone; he led me to the workshop on the site where an archeologist was piecing things together and after we had talked awhile they let me take their picture there among the artifacts. I am glad I saw the work in progress, still part ruin; it won't be half-way near so fascinating once it's neatly reconstructed. I say this remembering the disappointment of medieval Carcassone's manicured perfection where, as Mike and I walked the battlements three years earlier, we expected almost to be saluted by a Mickey Mouse in armor, so like a Disneyland display did it impress us. Here the Roman baths and homes are more like floor plans whose crude borders you can leap, more evocative of faded glory.

Met another fine old caretaker that afternoon at the archeological museum. I couldn't disabuse him of the notion I was a profesora and he took time out from touring what was probably a lucrative party to pinpoint special items for unprofitable me. There is a sizeable collection of Visigothic remains, which probably are scarce, for the northerners who swept down into Spain to rout the Romans and spread Christianity brought little culture with them. Here Spanish Visigoth art began, says the brochure, a coming together of the Roman, Byzantine and North African. Which probably accounts for its looking so unusual. Among the statuary was a head of the Emperor Augustus, he who in 25 B.C. founded Augusta Emerita as capital and sort of old age home for retired legionairies—hence the name, which subsequently got shaved down to Mérida.

Like so much of Spain, Mérida offers up memories of her Moorish past. As I entered the gaping ruins of the Alcazaba the following morning, a long-legged stork flapped broad white wings and soared aristocratically from its nest on top a crumbling rampart. Storks abound in the area; they seek out the oldest, most atmospheric perches.

Another caretaker—though this one wasn't old and sweet: more a suave fortyish, slender and with a profile that just missed being classic Roman by an extra quarter inch of nose—attached himself to me as I strolled past dug-up hunks of tile in geometric patterns propped against the mouldering walls. Once inside there seemed little more to see, though the structure itself was interesting, posed there where the historically important Roman bridge crosses the Guadiana.

"Come Señora," said the guide taking over. "You must visit the old well, the most impressive sight of all." When I realized that to do so I must descend steep crude stairs into a pit Invictus-black and slimy, I balked. But we had reached the brink and he had grasped my hand by then. I tried hard, still, to persuade him I could just as profitably peer down from up above, but he was going on about events that happened in the Caliph's time and a Roman dam that came before and I found myself willy-nilly handed down those giant steps into a damp and musty cavern where an inky pool glittered its bottomless threat in his flashlight's feeble rays. You must be una loca to have come down here alone with him...occurred to me briefly as, murmuring about Visigothic pilasters he took me softly by my arm's bare flesh to angle me in another direction where next he shone his light. And didn't I have a camera and wish to take a snapshot here as others did? I thanked him No, I only wanted up those steps and out. As I reached with my foot for one of the steeper ones, my skirt hitched up yeah high revealing god knows what and leaving me embarrassed, but once back in the bright sunlight that encouraged sanity I thought, Well, being a guide here he must get this all the time, with younger, shapelier limbs involved, and isn't thinking of you, Macey, as a woman, just a clumsy short-legged tipper.

Above ground, again he urged me to photograph something historic. This time I agreed: "Bueno, since you seem so eager that I do it. See those gentlemen over there?...If they agree you may take my picture with them, with the historic old bridge as background." I pulled out my camera, readied it for action and handed it to him, then walked to where four workmen were loading a stone that must have weighed a couple of tons onto a wheeled platform. They were most obliging as they posed with me beside them and the object of their labor.

Came time to tip the guide, I had unfortunately to change a hundred peseta note with him and to de-commercialize the transaction made some polite noises in the process. For his part he took both my money and the situation urbanely in hand, returning seventy-five pesetas with, "Is that the desired amount, Señora?" Since I

had put out an additional fifteen pesetas earlier for admission, this one little junket was costing me virtually sixty cents American—considerable pesetas in this part of Spain where, I'll wager, many a laborer earns only little more for a hard day's work in the fields.

But he hands out compliments as a free bonus, softening the blow. "You speak a very good Spanish," he lies generously as I prepare to leave.

Modestly I brush it off with, "Oh, but I have not much vocabulary..." my oft relied on formula that comes easily, is something to be saying and what's more is absolutely true.

He reacts as no one ever has before: “I could broaden your Spanish vocabulary considerably..." says he with gleaming eye. "If you would sit and rest in the shade of yon tree for just ten minutes, at one o'clock I am free and can accompany you."

Son of a gun...after all! But I keep my cool and smile and shake my head and say I had better just toot along.

Escorting me to the exit he stops to bore into my eyes with his and, coyly sexy, queries: "What's the matter, don't you like Spanish men? Don't you think we are simpático?"

"Señor," I toss off lightly, "I do indeed like Spanish men, admire them keenly..." then add I am however more attracted to my husband who's awaiting me back home. And march off in a pose bespeaking dignity (I hope) but also broad-based understanding and good humor.

And I do think that I understood him well, that Alcazaba Gigolo: on top of the twenty-five peseta tip, I'd be expected to pick up the tab for lunch and any subsequent activities.

Chapter Twenty-one: BADAJOZ, A CITY NAMED FOR PEACE

Jeff dear, (I wrote my older son,)

The mood is changed from my last letter, and I can't laugh with you right now. Rather, all by myself I have been crying. It is four A.M. Saturday in the one-star (but they exaggerate) Hotel Simancas in Badajoz, abutting the Portuguese border. It is a dreary room, bare-bulbed and khaki colored, the toilet down the hall. After the first sound sleep I woke up wide-eyed, tossed through a couple of hopeless hours, then rose and dressed. I had at any rate left word to be wakened at half-past five, for the train to Lisbon leaves at seven. Yesterday morning I exulted with an all-pervading sense of history; last night I wept for it. Fifty kilometers I came from sun-drenched Mérida and, silently and overtly both, have been weeping ever since. Beneath their cover of dark glasses my eyes kept misting over as I walked the twilit, then the dusk-filled, streets; when I woke just now I felt my cheek and pillow damp.

You are young to have heard about Badajoz, Jeff. But in my youth I wrote some girlish lines about a bleeding Spain and Guernica and the bullring of this remote small city. Three years ago your father and I began our Spanish stay in Guernica; this year I am ending mine in Badajoz.

Poor Badajoz! Once the Romans called it Pax Augusta....Pox would be more like it, with the town's sad history of not just "ordinary" bloodshed but a calculated viciousness inflicted on its people as though in fact a plague had been its destiny, a curse visited upon it.

Bits of history I must once have read come crowding the early morning hours in my barren Badajoz hotel room.

Centuries ago when the King of Castille was fighting to oust the Moslem kingdom from the South of Spain, Badajoz became the battlefront. Alfonso's strength was bolstered by Crusaders from Italy and France, while the Almohade Arabs, three hundred years the rulers in these parts, had got the help they asked for from the warlike Almoravides recently come to power in Morocco. At the end of the Battle of Zallaka, a uniquely bizarre minaret for the muezzin's early morning call to prayer was provided by a bloody towering mound of Christian soldiers' hacked-off heads.

I do not doubt that in an earlier day Badajoz was sacked and taken from the Romans by the Visigoths, then sacked again when conquered by the Moors.

In spring of l8l2, Lord Wellington, the Spaniards' friend and ally, laid siege to Badajoz to rout Napoleon's troops. The British stormed and breached the wall, hurdled the ramparts and proceeded at once to sack the town. Thus were the people of Badajoz liberated from the conquering French. Now they suffered the wanton pillage and rapine of the drunken British soldiers who raped and murdered as they went, uncurbed by their aristocratic commander. Only after eighteen hours of terror did Wellington decree: "It is now full time that the plunder of Badajoz should cease." This had been the toughest of his Peninsular campaigns and his troops had Gung Ho! gained the victory, to them belonged the spoils—noblesse oblige required it.

But the bloodiest of all the horrors suffered through its history by the city named for peace came in l936, less than a month from the time that Franco rose to crush the Spanish Republic.

Nine days after Franco's Foreign Legionnaires and Moorish troops broke through strong resistance to take the city, Jay Allen, correspondent for the Chicago Tribune (hardly the radical press, as you will know, Jeff) came to Badajoz. He had visited there several times before in connection with a book he was writing; had seen land distributed to the people in the agrarian reform he felt spelled Spain's salvation. Now he saw its shops and

houses wrecked, the town a shambles, the looting still proceeding. He wrote of the hot sweet stench of blood from the mass executions that, having already taken lives by the heavy thousands, continued daily. Of the crematory bonfires and their bitter smoke. Wrote of the bullring, where the fascists herded all whose shoulders showed a tell-tale black and blue from a rifle butt raised in defense of the Republic and at four in the morning marched them through the gate, arms overhead, to be mowed down by machine gun in the ring. Saw them still being rounded up, blue peasant blouse and mechanics coverall ripped aside to bare the shoulder for the still effective deadly test.

In Guernica Mike and I stood at the old symbolic tree of the Basques and paid homage. Here in Badajoz I hunted down the bullring.

Asking the way of children playing in the streets—for I wished to be as inconspicuous as possible, arouse no interest, involve no innocent Spanish bystander—near the banks of a stream I came at length to the designated corner. But the shiny modern stadium-like affair confronting me could not be the century-old structure of white plaster and red brick I had seen described: it lacked the mellowing by age and blood.

In the otherwise deserted street, I turned for help to a wizened little man with a penny-candy cart who hung about for non-existent business. But the simple folk in these parts I find extremely hard to follow—they must speak a dialect with a Portuguese affinity. As I barely made it out, this plaza de toros was erected just a year ago....No, the old one had stood down the road a piece....No, nothing of it standing any more, Señora. The man peered up at me closely, head tilted, small pink eyes a-squint with curiosity, and in his turn was asking me a question but I couldn't figure what. How fervently I wished we could communicate! Fearful now of blundering in beyond my depth, I mumbled my thanks and turned and walked away.

And walked all over Badajoz. And when I came upon a quarter that was plainly working class, paid homage instead on its narrow cobbled streets with the noisy running children and the hungry dogs and the wrinkled aging women smothered in black who sit stoic in white doorways. There are many women wearing black in Badajoz. I am told that in the older generation in the towns and villages of Spain, once they put on mourning they will never take it off. Some thirty years ago these same women by the tens of thousands took to black to mourn the men that, helpless, they had watched stampeded through the town like the bulls of Pamplona to the bull pens at the San Fermin fiesta. It was these same streets the women must have straggled back to, to tear their hair and keen and wail or weep in silence. And I walked them as the mourners' shadows lengthened in the doorways, trod their tragic cobbles and wept, Jeffrey, wept for it all. And as I did I fancied that your grandma joined me at my side and, gently loving, said to me nonetheless what she had to say: Du narische maidl, foolish child

You sentimentalist, how like you....Some twenty, thirty thousand Spaniards die here and you walk distraught through Badajoz and weep, when there are six million Jews who followed you could cry for! So I walked the streets as night closed in and I did that too behind dark lenses. New waves of anguish mounted as I went your grandma just a little better and wept as well for another four million who weren't even Jewish.

The town is thick with uniforms: they swarm all over. Especially is it true about the nucleus of the Plaza Espana, in Badajoz a nondescript square with the soul of a parking lot. It holds a squat ugly cathedral and a city hall in whose shadow I sat at a sidewalk table drinking sherry. Sat so close I kept re-reading with a fascinated loathing the plaque carved into the stone of its wall: the Arriba Espana! proclamation dated July l936...in the sign of Franco, el Caudillo; it is much like those on similar buildings elsewhere, as the José Antonio emblazoned on the stone of the neighboring cathedral is found on churches all through Spain.

Then I moved about the town again and couldn't help but note its pleasing aspects that from time to time would even briefly ride the crest of that lugubrious torrent which, once unleashed, bid fair to swamp me. Handsome old mansions with coats of arms and grillwork rejas and rococo trimmings. Rows of modest whitewashed houses whose flower boxes brought wrought iron balconies alive with color.

An elongated quadrangle of a dusty plaza where an occasional poorly dressed Spaniard straggled by, while not deserted, managed to exude the melancholy of a ghost town, its arcaded old white plaster structures bespeaking ages of neglect. Nearby, shattered sections of wall stood ineffectual guard; beyond them flowed the Guadiana and on a hillside overhead hung ruins that were once a Moorish castle. Here it must have been that Wellington's troops stormed the walls, then here again that Franco's forces clattered over the heavy toll of their own fallen to devastate the town and its defenders.

When I returned to the center where the animated evening crowds of the paseo now surged along the pavement, my interest lit on the street signs of Badajoz. High on a building at each corner appears the street name, uniformly designed in colorful tiles, accompanied by identification and dates of the personage so honored: artist, writer, politico, historical figure.

Carried along by the paseo's stream, I came soon to a lovely bit of park—an enormous grassy plaza, maybe—where somewhat stridently a band was belting out Valencia. Here they've fantastic little daisy trees and gigantic roses, many similar to the blush-yellow climbing Peace you will remember we once had. (I wonder if they call it Paz?) Among the refreshment stands middle class strollers make the sherry circuit arm in arm; parents are settled on benches, handsome meticulously groomed children tumbling about their feet until all hours whom they play with lovingly; as I passed, a man was gently making pat-a-cake with the son propped on his lap and I wondered if the verse resembled ours. These things I couldn't help but notice, although I was too tense, too overwrought to sit and blend and lose myself inside the scene...kept moving, turned inward still, but touching other lives despite myself out of the corner of my mind.

Even for Spain this must be a late-dining town. Hungry, worn out with the walking and emotion, after several exploratory sorties which found the various possibilities still deserted, at ten o'clock I anyway crossed from the rose-draped plaza to a restaurant whose posted menu included gazpacho. Who enjoys a lonely dining room? But my endurance last night had narrow limits.

Ten minutes spent in the ladies room repairing the ravages till now contained by the dark glasses, and my eyelids still felt raw and gritty. Entering the dining room, I chose a secluded table up against a window, overlooking the lively evening street.

The gazpacho arrived in a generous pottery bowl (I think they're made in town) surrounded by a host of little dishes filled with garnishes that the waiter proceeded to ladle into my soup.

He looked a human sort—a big man somewhere in his middle forties wearing black bow tie and satin-trimmed jacket and possessed of a remarkably square face. This was accentuated by the way his gleaming brown hair was beginning to clear the temples and by the rugged set of his chin; but the whole effect, which could have been forbidding, was softened by a mellow quality in his dark brown eyes that made you know he could be kind.

I needed badly to exchange some words with somebody in Badajoz and he spoke a Spanish that I followed relatively well. Except for two or three other waiters who came and went vaguely in the background, we had to ourselves that spacious well-lit room with its many white-clothed tables set with polished cutlery and sparkling glass in anticipation of the patrons who would yet arrive. I was not diverting him from duty when I inveigled him into standing by and talking.

"Es muy delicioso, el gazpacho," I said, finishing off the contents of the handsome bowl.

"The Señora likes gazpacho....? Yes," he said, pleased, "it is good...and refreshing in the heat."

"Sometimes I make it at home," I said, "in the United States. But I do not think it is ever quite so good. How is it prepared here?"

The ingredients he enumerated were much as I knew them, except for the lack of cucumber.

"No se usan cucombres?" I asked, taking a stab at it.

When the look of him showed me that this time my system had failed, I called upon my pocket dictionary.

"Pepinos...doesn't the cook include pepinos in gazpacho?"

"Ah, pepinos!...One doesn't often have them in this season, but yes, if the cook were to find himself with pepinos he would likely add them to the other things."

Did they use a blender, I asked, or mortar and pestle—trying maquina electrica for the first and my two hands for the other.

He understood me well and replied that here they felt the latter produced a better product.

When he had returned with my mushroom omelet I pointed through the window to where so many uniformed figures stood out among the others promenading by. "You have many police in your city, and soldiers and guardias. Is there some special reason?"

There was much strolling at this hour in the paseo, he replied, and made a reference I didn't quite get, perhaps to an army base in the locality. (In Mérida I recalled, I had passed what seemed military and guardia installations, more than one.)

Somewhere along the line he complimented me on my Spanish (even after that cucombre?) and I demurred, taking care to avoid the disastrous phrase of Mérida's Alcazaba. It was fairly good, bastante bien, he insisted encouragingly.

This emboldened me I guess; he had removed the omelet dish and brought dessert when I asked how long he had been living in Badajoz.

Always, he responded; he had been born and lived there all his life.

I felt I knew him pretty well by now...and his eyes were honest and good and the whole of him so simpático. In my mind I put together phrases very carefully, trying hard to get the tenses right and everything lined up properly so as not to shade the meaning incorrectly.

"I remember," I started slowly when I thought I had it pat, "that many years ago...I was still a young girl then...I read in the newspapers about your city. It was about the plaza de toros, the bullring, I believe." My hand shook a little as I set down the wine glass and turned from my concentration on the flan to view him standing there across the brief expanse of gleaming linen. "That was more than thirty years ago...something like thirty-four?"Then our eyes met. Met and clung and burned into each other for a timeless interlude while in the flame our hearts and minds and bodies coalesced. In that Badajoz waiter's eyes I met the anguish that had gripped me in its fastness since I first set foot in his city. In his bottomless dark eyes lay trapped the tragic soul of Spain, and I was held there captive with it. Eyes that more likely than not had watched father and brothers, shoulders and dignity stripped in the streets of this city, herded to the bullring I had spoken of. The soul of Spain?... back home that will seem sheer corn I guess, but not here, Jeff, not last night in Badajoz for sure.

So I was going to see Vienna after all. I boarded the Transalpine Express in Basel that morning still not completely satisfied I had made the right decision. From earliest plans Vienna had been a question mark, tempting for the glorious path that leads there and the chance to have another taste of Austria, and since even so long a haul from other points in my itinerary was now made feasible by the unlimited mileage of the railroad pass. Conclusive however, was my emotional response to the prospect...the associations Vienna had for me that came flocking at the moment of debate and with unobtrusive subtlety edged the decision over the border and into Austria.

We wrenched our eyes apart with a determined effort and descended to the world of superficialities.

"You were talking about the bullring..." he said in a high bright tone. I was dimly conscious of the other waiters somewhere in the room and a small party seated now halfway across it. "We have a corrida coming to town...not this Sunday, but the following. You like the bullfights?"

"Ah, sí, sí, sí!" I returned in kind. "Two weeks ago I saw El Cordobés in Barcelona."

"Ah, El Cordobés....And did you like him?"

"Sí, Señor, he was magnifico!" I emphasized it with that flirty Spanish motion of the wrist. Then it came over me all at once that I couldn't sustain the frothy talk and would have to leave. I wasn't sure what my runaway tongue would have to say or what further situation would develop. The vino tinto united with two extremely dry sherries to caution that in this pent-up condition I would do well to get myself to bed muy pronto. I said I had to get some sleep, for I must leave for Lisbon early in the morning, and might I have la cuenta por favor.

He asked where I was staying and in my way that has become habitual I answered noncommittally a small hotel nearby. Later I regretted having been so cautious, for perhaps he wanted to speak further.

He asked if I would drive to Lisbon, and I answered, No, el tren.

He brought the bill. I paid it and rose, leaving the paper to lie on the table.

He picked up the annotated sheet and held it out to me. "Perhaps you would wish to take the bill along, a remembrance of Badajoz...?"

We shook hands warmly, but I avoided his eyes. This time my throat felt full and the facade of my face was threatening to crack.

How can it be I'll never see again a man with whom I was so intensely intimate? I have the bill right here, made out in the beautiful classic hand

of Camarero Juan, but I would remember Badajoz always without it.

Thank you for listening, Jeff, I think it's helped. Now I had better don once more my magic purple traveling shoes and polka-dotted wings of bottomless anticipation, look for coffee, then a bus or taxi to the station on the fringes of the town. I must turn my thoughts to Portugal and things to come, leave Badajoz behind.

# # #

8 A.M.—Latest thing to come was a minor crisis! As we pulled to a stop at Elvas, the first in Portugal, a check of my timetable indicated a twenty minute lay-over. A wholesome-cheeked young man in uniform climbed aboard to examine passports and when he descended I noticed that the couple of men with whom I shared the entire train of three cars followed after. Looking out the window I could see what must be very charming panels of decorated tile lining the station platform's walls. To get a closer look and see what else was doing, why not I too take a breather? No sooner had I clambered off and headed for the charming walls than with a heart-rending clank and hiss el tren began to rattle away in the direction of the capital. I gave a yell and took off after it, banging mightily on its side and debating trying for a hand-hold to spring aboard before it gathered speed, for I was frantic: the only other train to Lisbon gets you there toward midnight—imagine hotel-hunting at that hour with nary a word of Portuguese! But the wholesome-cheeked one was at my side by now, tapping my arm politely in restraint and shaking his head in disapproval. He was murmuring shooshingly in reassuring tones as, decimated, I watched the train chug merrily on its way with my little blue overnight case in its keep. Shortly, I am happy to report, I saw it stop short with a jolt, shunt over to another track and work its way back unconcernedly, the routine accomplished.

It was from Elvas, incidentally, that Jay Allen sent his Badajoz dispatch. From the station it looked a lovely sight a mile or so above us where, all white, it spanned a valley to climb a gentle hill and achieve at the crest what could have been a Moorish fortress.

The train is shaking now, as are my hand and teeth....I was about to say that, except for olive groves, this terrain might be the landscape of middle Ohio, when just now it underwent a drastic change: big craggy clumps of boulder interspersed with olive; grazing sheep, stone fences, here and there along the tracks a whitewashed hut in a garden patch merry with trellised roses, pink and red carnations and lots of stately Easter lilies.

We are creeping into some place called Santa Eulalia, a sleepy hamlet of white stucco doll houses peaked in steep red tile. This poky train stops as much as it goes: would you believe seven-and-a-half hours to Lisbon from the Spanish border opposite, no more than eighty, ninety miles by the look of the map? But my train doesn't fly as the crow, inches along on its belly instead to create two lanky legs of a triangle. Several men got on at Elvas, traveling salesmen two of 'em maybe, with sample cases, and there's a bit of local on and off: man in stiff black high-domed hat, fat kerchiefed lady lugging bundles—ladies always lugging bundles! Am well content to be alone in my compartment and forego adventure for the rest of the morning. Passed a fiery drift of orange poppies trackside. Am being rocked (none too gently) in the cradle of the deep...head nodding, eyes drooping...see you anon....

# # #

Anon, hours later—The sight of the broadened Tagus River as Lisbon draws nigh inspires the following, which thou wilt hopefully forgive:

OH yon Tajo, here art thou mighty grown in readiness

To plunge into the ocean, merge with the Atlantic,

Shoot thy load! Nor wert thou always so:

I have known thee, Tajo, in less lordly mood...

When, like a choker of milky pearls, thou turned up

Coiled caressingly about Toledo's incomparable throat...

Or forging a shining swath of welcome relief

Through the arid monotony of Talavera de la Reina

Where I gorged myself on pottery....

Thus bloated did I follow thee to Puente del Arzobispo,

Cross thy so euphonious bridge of the archbishop

To resume Lucullan feasting on the lovely green glazed pots.

Thou art entitled surely, Oh yon Tajo, to some fun in Portugal.

On that note, Oh dear son, I leave thee and shortly this interminable train and soon, who knows, there might accrue as well in Portugal some fun to

Your everlovin'

Mamita Tuya

Chapter Twenty-two: SESIMBRA—A LUCID INTERVAL

He's a muddled fool,
full of lucid intervals
—Don Quixote

It would become one of those unforgettable golden days bursting with the stuff of life, euphoria flooding my lungs with every breath.

Sunday morning in Lisbon...and since my arrival the previous day I had been groping for a sense of the place. The city was confusing, coming at this time and in the present mood. I had just emerged from Spain and the searing emotional experience of Badajoz and was having to make a hasty adjustment. Spain had opened wide all my senses and the taste of Africa quickened them. How would they fare in Portugal? A new language replete with strange shooshing sounds; a new capital, swift-paced and bewildering; a new tangle of old streets. After arrival and hotel hunt, I had spent the balance of Saturday tramping about in the first fever of exploration, seeking broad outlines, unwilling yet to narrow to specific targets and those special points of interest I would eventually feel obliged to cover. Lisbon eluded my comprehension. I hadn't grasped it yet.

I breakfasted in a little pastry shop off the Restauradores, then worked my way up one of Lisbon's seven hills to the Alfama, the ancient quarter, little else remaining of the city following an earthquake's devastation two hundred years ago.

The Alfama could well be the most picturesque old district of my experience; it isn't the cleanest. The labyrinthine narrow streets where balconies strain to reach across and touch. Blind alleys that beguile one incessantly into retraced steps. Garbage crowding the streets along with cats and dogs and children: a raw chicken leg and fish head side by side and a small neat heap of feces suspiciously human. Rivulets that trickle downhill through the sharp-edged cobbles, smelling of urine. A whiff of dank must from a dark interior as a door flies open, oppressive to the nostrils even for the fleeting moment of your passage so you turn your head away—how would you live with it? Then, relief from squalor at the corner where the sun comes through: scarlet blossoms trail white crumbling plaster. Facade of blue-green azulejos, the Moorish tiles. Lanterns and grillwork speak of faded elegance, the majesty of time elapsed. On a Sunday morning already people promenade the streets, or lean against a doorway hailing those who do. Men fill the praça, women the church.

I find myself on the broad landing atop a cobbled step street that promised to lead on to intriguing byways but revealed itself an end in itself. Four or five boys shouting and scrambling, ducking loaded clothes lines, toss a ball about. It lands uncomfortably close to me and I return it with an accuracy of aim anticipated neither by myself nor them, causing us all to grin and the boldest of them to call out what I will only assume is a compliment.

This is my kind of thing, the Alfama, it's my bag! is my first thought. And my very next, that it is a cruel and ugly thing for children to mature in this quaint remnant from the Middle Ages that surely must be pestilential.

I weave throughout the lively streets, then those of dark and quiet mystery, and I have worked my way out to the south, descending the hill and headed for the river.

Slowly I walk along the Tagus, an estuary here, an inlet for the sea. I study the vigorous port life for awhile and walk past the crowded sweets- and fruit-stands that on a Sunday are the limited remains of the market. Just beyond, I stop where easy-going people board a ferry in a casual way and know at once this is a perfect day to

ride a boat that's bound most any place. I ask a guard in Spanish where the boat goes and he replies Cushcushcush and points across the bay to a hill with a tall cross at its crest and in Spanish tells me on the other side a bus will take one to the top. The ferry costs an escudo-and-a-half, or five American cents. For that I'll take a chance.

Mounting the gangplank I am Cushcushcush bound.

Then I stood at the rail and watched the land recede and as it did a wondrous thing was happening: the city wasn't growing dimmer, fading—but more sharply etched and clearcut, well defined, a thing of unity. An entity one might grow to understand and cope with. I saw the broader outlines now. I saw where I had been—and where I still must go. Placing that water between Lisbon and me, the ferry enabled insight into the city that I never would have otherwise achieved, not even from the highest hilltop and its castle when on the following day I would look down upon the roofs of Lisbon.

And posed at the rail of the ferry boat, the breezes of the Tagus driving into me the intense piercing sun of Portugal, I began to draw the obvious analogy. Here lay my life spread out before me, and the body of water I had placed between myself and it—in this case the Atlantic—enabled me now as not before to grasp the broader outlines, to analyze, to see laid over fifty years of it the high points and the valleys. Perhaps that ferry ride took twenty minutes, but I must have been thinking succinctly, each thought, each conclusion, built up more logically, framed more completely than is usual for me short of words—a more profound way of thinking that was developing on this trip with its lessened opportunities for dissipating thought in speech.

From where I stood now I could see the next hill and I knew I could be happy climbing it. I knew that I had more than one wellspring and that the drying up of one meant only that I must tap the next.

# # #

When we dock at Cushcushcush it is not the world-renowned Cascais, as I had thought it might be, but rather, nondescript Cacilhas. Lining the harbor are a multitude of eating and drinking establishments and after a quick walk past glossy seafood restaurants displaying tanks of lobsters in their windows, I enter some small dim friendly unobtrusive place with sawdust on the floor. Selecting from a high-piled platter on the counter a tiny roll with a bit of ham inside and ordering a glass of the crude red wine drawn from a barrel for a total of four escudos, I carry them to a table.

Taking from my handbag the small paperback guide to Portugal purchased the previous day, I look up Cacilhas. It tells me what I already have suspected—that this is a town of little interest. But also that it is a major bus terminal for the surrounding area. Further, it advises I can either take a bus or walk to the huge modern monument of Christ the King on the heights of Almada, dedicated in 1959 as a symbol of Portugal's thanksgiving for being kept out of World War II. I think that I will skip that one—though I do appreciate the sentiment—and see what else is offered at the buses just outside.

Lingering over the drink but briefly, I have a look about the room. A sizeable family group at another table have just ordered wine and reached into their huge straw bag for the food to accompany it. They are probably having a preliminary snack and snort to sustain them in their climb to the Christ monument. Good luck to them.

I walk to where the buses congregate and survey the constant stream, then check their destinations off against my little guide book. A place called Sesimbra takes my fancy, having retained its atmosphere as an unspoiled fishing village yet being in fact a popular resort...very good sandy beach backed by imposing cliffs...and fado in the evenings at a little restaurant. I note particularly well that last, since I have been looking forward to hearing the fado sung which, I understand, is Portugal's answer to Spain's flamenco, an expression of the melancholy and longing in the Portuguese soul....

Sesimbra appears a simple village of typical tile-roofed white houses lying in a strip not many streets deep adjoining the sea. I check the return schedule at the tiny station, have no idea how long I will stay. It is almost three now, but there is no problem.

I head for the sands, where only a few adventurous souls brave the mid-April surf. High on the cliffs above the town stands the usual castle that the Moors have left, but it looks difficult to reach. Taking alternate bearings I turn west and set out along the coastal road to where Cape Espichel juts into the sea. There are frequent cars

and occasional strollers and at times a team of hardy bathers or sunners emerges on it, clambering up the modest cliffs that have begun to form between the sands and road.

Now the fishy breeze off the Atlantic is driving into me a massive dose of joie de vivre along with sun, and entrenched at the back of my mind yet vivid is that new comprehension of the ferry boat railing. New Horizons, Macey! And I am humming, Blue Skies, smiling at me...and striding ever more determined up that ascending road.

I am headed for a harbor filled with fishing boats off where the coastline veers dramatically and where the road descends abruptly to the level of the sea.

The boats lie at anchor on a Sunday, yet they leap to my sight with strong primary colors, no subtlety here, the yellow of Portugal's sun by far a favorite. Mostly they are modest fishing boats no more than hinting at a cabin, but occasionally there will be a trawler, one raised out of the water for repairs. Nets and cork floats clutter the dock and coils of rope lie slung around stanchions; in places the paving glistens slippery with slicks of oil. Carefully I pick my way along the sidelines, watching fishermen putter about their boats with chores and minor fixings as they call to one another from deck to deck...advice?... exchange of news?...

# # #

In time returning on the road to town, I noticed again the humble outdoor eating place with the crude hand-lettered sign that said here fried fish was served. This time hunger held me to the spot. Perched well above the level of the road, it gave a sweeping outlook onto the Atlantic—no more than eight, nine wooden tables thatched over against the sun, dirt for a floor. I chose a private spot strategic to the view.

Somehow, though, I was unable to get through to the young waitress that I wished to partake of the fried fish that others about me were consuming with such gusto. She shook her head and nothing I could say or do would budge her from her posture. Perhaps I wasn't shooshing properly? I did, however, take solace in the white wine I prevailed on her to bring.

But the pungent smell of fish frying and being eaten close at hand was stoking the fires of an accelerating hunger. Casting about for a source of help, I beckoned to a boy of seven or eight dawdling nearby, a skinny thing with great dark eyes. Knowingly he nodded as I asked for fish and brought his mother, who smiled and nodded and brought her husband from the brazier in the corner. Looking to others for a clue, I ordered three. The mother meanwhile had returned with a basket of good white bread, coarse of texture, crisp of crust. She was a pleasant, wholesome woman, her neat black hair drawn tight, defining cheeks of rose-tinged olive. With her I felt relaxed and welcome there and somehow, language be damned, we were soon exchanging empathy and beaming mutual good will. The fish was delicate and sweet of flesh and shortly I had overcome the first revulsion on finding the guts all cooked inside with the rest. I ordered, in time, another decanter of the harsh but refreshing wine, for it had been a small one, not adequate to the thirst engendered by the many miles of walking in the hot spring sun.

By now the child had attached himself to my table and we too had a great thing going. In a sweeping swap of confidences, he learned I was American, I that he went to school. Several chunks of bread remained after I had finished my fish. Edging a hesitant little hand toward the basket, he raised questioning eyes, then at my nod attacked with vigor. He had almost completed the job when a bell sounded in the road: an ice cream vendor on a bicycle. That frosty chocolate-covered bar cemented a ripening friendship.

Taking my leave, I sought out the woman to say with a handshake how simpático was her son, to send my appreciation to the chef for his good work with the fish. The boy accompanied me to the road below, then smiling broadly shook my hand. When shortly I turned for a last departing look he was standing there still, feet spread apart and waving.

So I was going down the road feeling no pain, exulting inwardly, At last, Macey, you are in touch with your environment! And if Portugal isn't exactly your oyster, at least it is your platter of fried fish, guts and all....

When just ahead I saw an ancient drunkard staggering before me. Weaving from side to side of the road, he would unfailingly come to periodic rest where he was most vulnerable to demolition by a car as it rounded an almost blind curve.

"Cuidado, it's very dangerous!" I shouted toward him in Spanish! He turned, stock still in the middle, leered at me happily and returned some probably extraneous but certainly good natured answer. Swerving and

squeaking, a car scraped by him narrowly and horrified I tried again: "Vaya a casa—go home old man—geh shehn, geh!" giving him everything I had, hoping to reach him with something. He paid me no heed. Hastening to where he teetered in the middle of the road, I succeeded in leading him somehow over to the shoulder. He had difficulty staying lined up and required an occasional tug, but at last we had attained the main beach, where a gentle shove aimed him toward the sands. With intense relief I relinquished the keeping of my brother and turned to face the town.

# # #

Came a loud crackling shot and explosion, a mighty blue-white burst of light....The air trembled and the thunder rolled and echoed along the sea. Fireworks! And in the background the sounds of a marching band. Excitement in the streets of Sesimbra, and I drawn toward the heart of it, drinking it in as I go. Whatever else it is, it is all of a piece with this day.

Where the crowds were converging I soon reached the source. Then I glimpsed it approaching: the ranks of bright scarlet, massed flowers, a uniformed band. Well to the rear, I despaired of an intimate look, but then, as the core of the procession came abreast of where I stood, Lo! when the float glided by, all to the front of me bowed in obeisance. I now enjoyed a box seat there at the back and by proceeding parallel with the float obtained in time an excellent overview. There must have been a hundred men and boys, jackets of red flannel hanging to their knees. The float they led, shored up and followed bore a lifelike Christ whose long black hair blew ruffled by the breeze, the center of thousands of flaming carnations and roses. The band beat out its mournful dirges, pacing the marchers with solemnity in this, the Festa da Chagas. They were pacing me too, there at the outskirts of the crowd with my unobstructed private viewing at each genuflection of the devout.

# # #

The sky was darkening; the breezes off the sea intensified as I walked the town to ferret out the fado promised by my guide book for the evening hours. At nine o'clock I was the Ribamar's only customer. To dine in solitary splendor as on that Tangier afternoon would detract from my enjoyment; it would inhibit the intensity of the pleasure I was taking from this day. Making the best of a dubious situation, I chose a prime table near the cleared center where the fado singer would appear, ordered more fish for dinner and the rose wine of the house to ease me over the awkward solitude.

Solitude did I say? In half an hour the little place was jammed, people pressing close about the bar and crowding tables. It had been filling steadily and then suddenly we were invaded by a swarm, say twenty-five, Americans on tour. Three joined me where I sat, two pleasant faced women and a tall young man, all congenial, and shortly we had exchanged the usual vital statistics, place of dwelling and of birth and all the rest.

The tour leader was a slim attractive Portuguese girl, mini-skirted and with a vivacity that was the mainstay of her role. She buzzed back and forth, completing arrangements with the management, then informing her charges they had $3.50 each for this slot in their itinerary and, having already eaten dinner, might just as well order bottles of champagne. Technicalities squared away, she flitted from one to another of her males, leading them onto the dance floor, enticing them into tango or rumba; and the older and more sedate the men, the more obvious their enjoyment. Between times she would alight for a girlish chat with her women folk.

In the clearing that our table bordered on was a three piece band for dancing to and an accordionist who also sang; there were native dancers too in colorful folk attire. Alas, however, no fado, which the waiter had assured me was forthcoming. The wine flowed freely, for those who shared my table champagne and into me the non-bubbly cruder stuff at seven escudos the demi-liter. The jollity of the evening was progressing apace. Members of the tour were having the great time they had left American shores to seek and I too, I admit, was caught up in the spirit of the thing.

I was enjoying the whole thing enormously, fado or not, but from time to time would consult my watch and wonder when they'd bring it on. If I missed that last bus at eleven there was nothing for it but to bed down on the sands. To be safe I had best allow ten minutes for walking to the station. Wedged behind the table as I was, I would need to disturb others and work my way across the crowded floor; thus, at a break in the entertainment shortly after half-past ten I took the opportunity to make my farewells and head toward the area near the door, where people crowding the bar could still have an intimate view of the dance floor.

There was a dearth of women in the vicinity, and a small circle of men was gathering about me, including a rather sotted American who, when I said I was leaving momentarily for Lisbon, wished to meet me there on the morrow. Then a handsome slight young Portuguese, dark eyes warm and humorous, turned to me and asked, "You spik Ingleesh?"

"A leetle," I replied. We were standing at the border of the dance floor, where a bouncy native melody was now getting thumped out lustily. The few couples dancing seemed to know their way around the music, including the mini-skirted tour leader in a local's arms. And I suppose that all this time my foot was lightly tapping out the rhythm.

"Come," said my new friend of the warm and humorous eyes, gesturing expressively. "We dance."

"Oh no," I laughed up at the nice young man, "I can't dance like that!" Nor am I the world's best dancer in any fashion. However, with inhibitions lowered sufficiently, I have been known to let go in a jazzy gyration whose point of departure is the polka danced long ago at cousins' weddings. This vigorous polka step I have in time modified with a soupçon of Highland Fling for the arm movement, blending the whole with a modicum of jitterbug for freeform self-expression. At my best I will throw in an occasional docedo, ducking under my partner's arm and circling back to back.

And that's precisely what happened, unbelievably but nonetheless it happened! Before I knew it I had handed my shoulder bag over to a neighbor and was entering the dance floor with my Portuguese gallant. We were signaling delight into each other's eyes and I was letting go my feet, forgotten, and blending in his firm but understanding lead. Then he let me have my head and we went swinging into polka and inevitably I jitterbugged and flung and docedoed. Suddenly the floor had cleared of other couples; people had deserted tables to crowd the periphery and palmado to the rhythm of us and I was really dancing to the gallery...with everything I had! Clap-clap clap-clap swing and fling and docedo, shake it baby here we go!

Oh-my-god Macey, this can't be happening to you! I shouted silently and then remembered and looked at my watch and ominously it told me just eight minutes till the hour. I banked off the clouds to a graceless stop, gasped a deep breath, thanked my Portuguese polka partner in a flurry, retrieved my bag and plowed through the crowd to gain the door. The cluster of men around it had evidently relished my performance, the likes of which I'll wager they had not experienced in Portugal before. Reluctant to see me leave, they were questioning why I must at the very shank of a spirited evening.

"A-u-to-buss..." I explained with a helpless shrug and upturned palm.

"Aiee! a-u-to-buss!" they repeated dejectedly, wringing mournful hands as I faded mysteriously into the Portuguese night, Cinderella going on fifty.

Chapter Twenty-three: LOBSTERS IN LISBON

The lobsters in the window were enormous and if you stood awhile and watched you saw they were alive by the way they poked a hairy feeler and made a little progress in the tank. You could tell by their color, really: they hadn't the look of when they'd be served up a succulent sunset and you'd pry them loose from the shell in bits—which would be half the pleasure—to dip into a foaming golden sea of molten butter.

Maybe you, that is, would be dipping lobster. For my part, I continued pressing through the hungry evening crowds that jammed the Rua das Portas de Santo Antao, a hectic narrow street lined with popular restaurants and cafés of some diversity. It parallels the Avenida da Liberdade, that dignified principal thoroughfare with its modish mall, until at the pivotal Rossio—Times Square of Lisbon—they run together in the black and white mosaic of the pebbled pavement. I was almost abreast of the next display of seafood and, perversely drawn, would surely have paused again in admiring contemplation, when it became necessary to step off the curb to accommodate the bulky pair of determined matrons bearing down on me toward some gustatorial goal of their own. By the time I had retaken the sidewalk I'd nearly been run down by one of the small black bugs of taxis that careen, malignant viruses, through the city's old constricted arteries and was so relieved to have made it that lobster lost all priority in my desires: to survive was somehow more important.

When shortly a restaurant across the street looked fitting for the moderately festive meal I had been promised by myself, I braved the honking traffic to investigate. Peering tentatively through the open door, I was given enthusiastic welcome by a heavily gold-braided doorman, then immediately swung inside and passed along to a formally attired head waiter. The decision was now out of my hands, which in such a vacillating mood—the occasional by-product of solitary travel—I think I welcomed. I was promptly ushered to a small table against a wall but in a pleasant location and made to feel wanted despite my single female status. A little fancier than I was looking for perhaps, but nice.

Only fleetingly did I run my eye along a certain entry on the menu. And it said the usual thing: they were priced according to size—with no clue as to cost per pound or weight to be encountered. I could ill afford to write so blank a check, was finding Lisbon not quite the bargain paradise anticipated. I had in fact achieved what seemed a real bargain for an earlier meal, having at last unearthed the famous caldo verde in a simple lunchroom on this very street, when I found myself unable to get it down. This "green soup" everywhere proclaimed the sine qua non of native Portuguese fare, is said to contain basically cabbage and potatoes, but mine was a quagmire of slimy viridian weed buoyed up by swollen pustules of rancid olive oil. The waiter, I must in justice add, had attempted to warn me it little befit the American taste. Now tonight's preoccupation with lobster, I suspected, was largely a compulsive thing. Seeing all those creatures in the windows, remembering all I had read that harangued the traveler, When in Portugal be sure to have the lobster! (To take away the taste of the caldo verde, I suppose.) Did I then liken myself to an ordinary tourist? I thought you sought a different Europe, Macey! It's not like bouillabaisse in Marseille or Vienna's Sacher torte...don't worry, those you'll have. But lobster in Lisbon, after all, is lobster anywhere— including Bookbinders in Philadelphia.

I glanced about the room, approved of what I saw at a nearby table, found the corresponding item on the menu, noted I could just barely afford it and in time the roast veal arrived on a silver platter ringed with tiny browned potatoes and mounds of relishes and vegetables. It looked beautiful, tasted good and provided a welcome change from yesterday's fish. A half bottle of rose from the bottom of the wine list to accompany it and now I was free to turn my attention discreetly to my surroundings as I awaited then enjoyed my dinner.

The restaurant was comfortably filled, just right so that a pleasant brew of conversation and occasional laughter, together with the normal sounds of food being brought to table—all of it sufficiently modulated but not self- consciously hushed—provided a background where even a loner could feel included in the party. The

lighting too was right, neither dim nor garish; and the stylized murals everywhere of fishermen in native garb mucking about among their nets, while predictable were pleasing. I really liked the place, felt relaxed and easy.

At the table on my right an American couple had got a good start on me. I had just been seated when I saw the waiter bring them a rather giant of a living lobster to inspect, then raise his eyebrow to enquire. The man had looked questioning toward his companion for approval and, that being where the buck must stop, with studied nonchalance she had given him the nod and similarly he had signaled acquiescence to the waiter. A real production.

For a time my attention wandered elsewhere: the festive party speaking Portuguese who welcomed the Doctor and spouse as they arrived a little late; the women, all of them attired in stylish black, pecking each other on both cheeks; the men rising, bowing, shaking hands; the obvious delight they took in the spirited formality of their ways. At another table, the doe-eyed sable-skinned, bare-thighed youngster and the beau who leaned across to her with eyes reflecting so transparently the juices speeding through his loins, I hoped that they had picked short-order items from the menu.

A twelve-year-old busboy in red jacket and brass buttons who hovered over my table performing his little duties spoke a modicum of English which he was glad to practice and we talked awhile. Later he would return at intervals to visit.

It wasn't until their lobster made its dramatic second appearance that I noticed my Americans again. The waiter wheeled his wooden cart tableside and proceeded to do the honors himself on its colorful burden, depriving the pair rather heartlessly, I thought, of a delightful portion of the venture. Cracking the shell efficiently with his tools in one place and another, with a flourish he extracted the meat neatly and with another relayed it to their plates.

No sooner had he departed than the woman, a small attractive blond in a soft wool suit of pastel green, said to her companion, "Louis...did you see that?"

"What, sweetheart...did I see what?"

"The claws, sweetheart, he didn't leave the claws!"

Well, I myself had rather missed that.

"Shh, don't raise your voice like that. People will be looking if you keep it up...."

“But we're entitled to the claws, Louis. He took them back into the kitchen...I suppose he'll eat them there himself." A half-hearted attempt to bring her voice down hadn't quite succeeded.

"Why don't you start on what you have, Iris? It's a very adequate lobster and I'm sure we'll have enough to eat."

"But we'll be paying for the whole lobster, Louis, claws and all...and those were so enormous that they must be very meaty!"

"Maybe they don't eat the claws in Lisbon, Iris. Maybe they consider lobster claws vulgar here in Lisbon...it's a whole different culture, Portugal ...did you ever think of that? Maybe it's just not ethnic here to eat the claws!" Now he was getting hot.

"Louis..." she craned about uneasily, really trying to subdue her voice yet unwilling to relinquish the attack. "You could just call the waiter, there he is, and ask him for the claws....You could do that, you know...." She was warming to her subject: "And just this once stop worrying about your ethnic and your culture!"

"For god's sake, Iris!" His voice soared out of control momentarily and was pulled down with difficulty as he looked about, but warily, trying to dissemble. He drew a large beige handkerchief from the breast pocket of his brown plaid sports jacket and dabbed at his forehead. "When will you stop being such a dude!" he muttered. "You never will, I guess, will you? I should give up on you!"

"Who should give up on who? ... or would you rather I said whom! If you really were the gentleman with all that breeding you're always boasting about, you wouldn't mind just calling the waiter, just doing that little thing to make me happy. Why do you always, but always, in your every act..."

"Don't say it!" he cut in sharply. "I warn you, Iris, don't you say it!"

"I'll say it all right, I'll say what's true! You always slough off the least little bit of extra time and effort it would take to make me happy!"

"Iris!"

"Just so you're satisfied, that's all that counts."

"You bitch, you miserable bitch...."

"This, after all, is no great strain on you, Louis, no great shakes. All you have to do is say, 'Waiter, could we please have the lobster claws? Where we come from they eat the claw meat too, it's very sweet you know....And plenty ethnic too!' That's all you have to say!"

"Jee-sus sweet Jesus!" Lewis was evolving a technique of keeping his voice carefully contained throughout the thickest of the battle; this way it came through even more effectively nasty. "I should have left you in that stupid little town I found you in. Once a hick, always a hick—just like you were five years ago....Only five years? God, it seems like twenty-five with you around my neck! That's where you ought to be right now, back in Ohio, Hicksville, Ohio....Who ever heard of world travel where you come from! The minute I saw your mother I should have known...."One parting thrust before retiring from the fray. "Pretty obvious how you'd turn out...not as frumpy lookin' a bitch yet, but that'll come, that's sure to come. You sure as hell act just as stupid, you've gotten there already, that's plain to see!"

She mumbled something like, "Leave ma out of it"—it was hard to hear; her small blond head was bent, eyes lowered to the plate, the lobster speared and eaten with dispirit. He was cramming his down now as though nourishing an ulcer.

A frigid silence enveloped their table and in the hiatus I had finished off my salad, ordered up some of the excellent cheese from Azeitao and turned my attention elsewhere. I think my friendly busboy was entertaining me when it happened.

The waiter wheeled his cart back tableside, cracked open the two scarlet lobster claws, with a flourish extracted the meat neatly and with another served it up on their plates, as with his little waiter smile he inquired rhetorically, "You are ready for the claws, yes?"

I noticed them just once again. I was having coffee when their bill arrived. Louis was examining it and Iris was examining his face, anxious for the verdict.

"How much, Louis?" she ventured at length when he hadn't spoken.

His calculations complete, he raised his eyes, obviously well satisfied. "About twelve bucks, tip and all. Not bad, huh?" He flicked a pleasant glance toward his wife, friendly as you'd want it, leaned back in his seat all relaxed and proceeded to bite the tip neatly off his panetela.

She beamed back and pulled out her green enamel compact.

They were as one in admiration of the astute choice of lobster jointly made—the perfect marriage.

I left Iris and Louis to each other and hurried toward the elegant Marquis de Pombal area and Lisbon's sports arena.

# # #

I had stumbled without design, you see, on the city's Day of the Tourist. In the morning, the tourist bureau had outdone itself with a gift kit holding sardines, a sample of the country's rich and full-bodied port, so sweet and heady, like none they export, and a small pottery black-and-red rooster apparently Portugal's trademark. Seen carrying my kit along the street, I had been presented, all part of the well-conceived program, with a long-stemmed rose. That afternoon, breathless I had returned to the tourist bureau just too late to join their complimentary tour of outlying towns, having raced back from a hasty outside inspection of the Tower of Belem, a sixteenth century Manueline structure which, I had learned the hard way, was closed on Mondays. Even the desperate last minute ploy of leaping from bus to passing taxi had not enabled me to make the tour. I emerged the Sad Sack tourist who, beholden to do all the obligatory things, was muffing even those, and only hours of tramping the city's up-hill down-hill clanging scruffy old streets, lost and delighted, had canceled out the wormy aftertaste.

But the evening's folkloric exhibition at the sports arena, planned to cap the day for us tourists and so eagerly attended by this one still remembering with a glow Valencia's three years earlier, had cancelled out the cancellation.

It had started well. Groups from various localities high-stepping it about the hall, preening, their colors gorgeous: bursts of orange and ripples of pink, festoons of green and purple papier-mâché grapes. Men in stocking caps and tightly-molded breeches or the broad-brimmed feathered hat and flouncing cape, their frilled and ruffled women in tight-laced corselet and pleated apron, fields of flowers blooming on embroidered shawl. The childlike simplicity of triangles such as I remembered sounding in my kindergarten band, timing the accordion’s blustery ebb and flow...giant Mardi Gras creations cavorting to a band of booming drums.

In short order it had petered out, the uncomplicated native dances giving way to a wise-cracking master of ceremonies, the occasion given over to an amateur night, a burlesque boisterous and ugly. When the cat-calls freely hooted just behind my ear—par for the course, evidently, judging by the tolerant lack of interest of several uniformed attendants in the vicinity—when the rowdy Portuguese youngsters just behind me got to be too much, I picked myself up and walked away from fiasco, knowing I must stop comparing Portugal with Spain.

Tuesday morning I decided on a few days at Nazaré for change of pace—a peaceful interlude during which I could digest recent happenings and catch up on notes and correspondence, as well as experience something of the countryside. Boarding train again, I was off for the famous fishing village with its Phoenician-prowed boats, its Scottish plaid home-spuns and above all its colorful fisher folk, all attesting to its place in history and unchanged face through centuries that passed it by. So I had come past white stone cones of windmills on the hilltops, their white sails all puffed out and whirring, past the red-roofed whitewashed hamlets that they guarded. Past stately calla lilies in the gardens and a crumbling aqueduct. In a field of grain that dazzled with the blinding sunshine, a kerchiefed woman laboring beside a burro paused, eyes shaded by a hand, to watch the train speed by and responded to my wave with her raised sickle.

Chapter Twenty-four: SARDINES IN NAZARE

There is this very personable boy with devilish grin and curly-haired blond good looks, going on seventeen. His English is quite adequate and early in my stay in Nazaré he comes to the table where I sit and starts to talk. He is usually at my corner when I arrive, around the aperitíf hour. But he is stationed in the road in a line-up of several others, to ensnare new arrivals for his particular hotel, whereas I am seated comfortably at a pavement table over the port or the lightly sizzling vino verde from a bottle that the waiter will trot out again for me inside at dinner. The blond boy has little business in this season and I much leisure and, he knows, a willingness to smile and talk to him, so at intervals he will close the gap of several feet between us and try his English on me. Today a tall dark lad follows him over and smiles shyly, so I say Hello. This he manages to return, but little more. No, he says, he has neither English nor Spanish, only the Portuguese. Pointing to the blond one he indicates that he, however, is a master of languages, speaks English, Spanish, French, Italian. Yes, that one, clear to see, is a very bright and brash young thing—and I fear that should he once start to inquire about jobs in America, why I'll carry him right back with me.

Now the young waiter, who is Spanish, and the blond boy, both of them bored from lack of business, are horsing around. The latter is imitating the fisherman's auction, held daily in the town, rattling off the numbers backward very rapidly in French. He glances toward me and switches to English.

I interrupt shortly with a little bark and urgently raised fore-finger; "I'll take that!" I exclaim.

Can he do it in Italian, I ask. He can't, but the young waiter takes over with a "dieci nove otto sette.... Pero," he adds in Spanish, "I don't like the Italians. I like all peoples, but not los italianos."

For my benefit speaking English, the boy says, "And I am liking all peoples, but not Germans."

I say, "And if I weren't here, what would you say about los americanos?" But they duck that one.

Not only the bright blond boy and the Spanish waiter are my friends. At the hotel where I have settled, a half-kilometer along the shore from town's center, I have found a sympathetic personage as well in one of the clerks. Joao, twenty-four, speaks a little English and keeps me lingering in the lobby often as I pass. He likes to hear about the U.S., hopes some day to go, and we exchange addresses. Nazaré is confining, a dead end, and he unhappy, weary of the highly-touted fisher folk and too, I gather, the tourist trade attracted by them. They are a crude bunch, the former, he is quick to advise me, to divorce himself from them in a middle class aloofness.

Late one afternoon I am seated over the wine, here at sand's edge at my café, taking in the local color. The women go swishing by me in the street, plaid skirts puffed out over layers of variously colored petticoats, the swing of their hips—with no regard to age—provocatively sexy. Sometimes they whoosh past at a graceful loping pace, carriage majestic, container of fish balanced neatly on the head above the dark shawl that encompasses half the body. Comes one, in fact, balancing four boxes stacked atop each other, aided only by her right hand lightly guarding. And the three who pass me now, their slatted cases crammed with fish and ice and they seemingly unaware of what must be mighty smelly drippings over face and shoulders...ugh! Three fish swing by their tails from the hand of a woman in rustling black cape, bare feet and a tasselled pork-pie kind of hat. Comes now a plaid-shirted stocking-capped old man, walking with measured pace and gripping through its middle a six-foot eel all silvery and shiny in the six o'clock sun. But the burdens aren't all fish: one woman's head serves as platform for an outsize metal barrel.

On the beach in the background a team of oxen pulls a two-wheeled cart that's filled with stones. Often I watch the beasts hauling the little crescent-shaped fishing boats to the edge of the sea and later toward evening

back up on the sands. As they pass, all the dogs within scent come dashing, stop short and bark vociferously, but I've never seen them tangle.

Well, I am sitting thus entranced by this richly tapestried parade and dabbling in my little note book, when suddenly on the sands across the narrow street the crowds are gathering amid much noise and confusion, leaving me barely time to witness what precipitated them. It is a fist fight, the antagonists a fisherman and fisherwoman, and from their mouths emerge the foulest sounds. Sounds that find their equal in the crowd surrounding, and similar to the heckling at my shoulder at Lisbon's folklore exhibition. Voices stiletto sharp, phrase ending on a rising tone drawn out into an almost echo. You've heard about sounding like fishwives—this is it—a loud coarse ceaseless chattering accented by that grating up-beat.

The young waiter, nothing better to do for the moment, crosses the street to watch briefly as the fight progresses. " ¿Qué pasa?" I ask on his return and shrugging he replies, "Es típico...."

I don't know how the beach looks during summer's tourist season; fortunately this is not it. A bus swoops down daily from Lisbon for an hour and is the occasion for a flurry of activity at shops and cafés and, I suspect, quaintness demonstrations for hire by camera fans. Then it continues on its rounds toward the monastery at Alcobaça and all is calm again. But the sands seem truly home to the fishermen and their families, this is not a put-on. When not at sea the men are seen mending their nets or tending to other tasks, napping beside their boats, playing there with their children. Nearby, laundry hangs from lines, together with cloth that has been woven and dyed.

Today is a clear bright energetic morning with winey breezes off the sea. On the sands, each person has his work to do, his family, his companions to join him in the doing. I come to a stop where an industrious family circle, numbering roughly twelve, sit cross-legged about the voluminous net being mended. They are one with the elements, of nature's design; they respond to the sea wind's imperative and, crude and loud-mouthed though they be, this cloaks them in divinity. And I, I am of clay and looking in from outside.

I approach the elder statesman, watch awhile, then venture a smile and Bom Dia...no camera, nothing but the timid smile, the hesitant hello.

In response? No door swung open, no warm acceptance, not even a frosty nod of the head. Instead a tongue lashing, bitter and sardonic.

"I do not understand, Senhor," I try in Spanish and he understands me well enough.

Comes back in mimicking Portuguese what's got to be: "Yes you, why you don't understand a thing of life, not anything, turista, that is true!"

Mortified, I look about the group to catch a friendly eye, but there is none, child nor grandma. All are leering at me, mocking in a kind of nightmare sequence.

# # #

At evening's approach I walk to the water's edge between hotel and café to watch the hauling-in of nets, the famed "arte xavega." Here side by side two columns, maybe twenty barefoot men and women, stand poised, their trousers rolled, skirts hitched up high. In a Volga Boatmen rhythm they all pull hard at short equal intervals on two ropes stretched out well past the tumbling surf. These attach to a net a distance out from shore, no doubt left there early in the morning by a crescent rowboat with an historic thrusting prow. At the landside end of each rope, someone is coiling it up as it gets paid in. Moving back with the rope, as haulers find themselves at the coiled up end they run forward to find an opening closer to the sea. As the surf offers more resistance, all participants yank harder. Some are chanting as they tug, and I am later told by Joao there is a language peculiar to the process. In time two spherical orange floats get dragged ashore and a man steps forward to lug them further back on the sand. (Later I will see them hauled off on someone's shoulders, suspended on a yoke, the enormous coils of rope wheeled away in a cart.) The tension rises as the net comes close, then at last it has been landed amidst much noisy excitation, its first folds hoisted onto the wet sands empty, or virtually so. One last vigorous heave and the bulk is hauled ashore. All hands run forward to admire, evaluate and, I suppose, hastily calculate their share. Though they are apparently well satisfied, for me it is dramatic anti-climax when I see the catch: no more than a couple of hundred sardines four, five inches long. I have observed that the local fishermen always handle sardines lovingly, fondling them as these are doing. But all that straining and tugging by all those

people, the earlier work of placing the nets and the regular upkeep of them....Must there not be an easier way, if less picturesque!

I had looked forward to catching this hauling-in of nets, yet felt self-conscious all the while I wielded instamatic—for certainly they were working so hard on the ropes while I was playing. In the final close-up stages I had questioned, " ¿Con permiso?" surely recognizable in Portugal, receiving no response.

Now a group of women swaddled in black who had participated sit grouped on the sand in well-earned relaxation. Laughing to each other knowingly they gesture toward me to approach and photograph them. I do so, then smile broad thanks. Whereupon they howl derisively, shutting me away, making me feel one enormous horse's ass. "Mon-ee-e-e!" they whine in their evil harpy shrill. My reaction is confused, uncertain. Flustered, I open my bag and grope for coins. Handing them to the closest woman, I motion her to share them. They examine the coins, then rises again a coarse and mocking laughter as I flee the beach once more, and I know that they are shouting after me in cruel glee, "Can you really spare it, piker!"

Let me remember, it is a hard life and the sea a cruel master. Yet in Spain and elsewhere too I have found fishermen and they were hardly of this ilk. They had been friendly and proud and independent. Is it then the nature of the village, where the picturesque old folkways and garb in a setting of such scenic beauty bring the tourists running—me included—and shooting with their cameras? Has civilization, which by a quirk encouraged rather than altered their ancient ways, at the same time corrupted the people? And why so prissily pathetic, Macey? Come! must everybody love you? Do caged orangutans love the wide-eyed starers from without? Are they to be faulted? Or you?

# # #

Nazaré lies in two parts. About the lower town I have already told you something. On a promontory high above it perches the smaller Sitio da Nazaré, founded they say, when a shepherd unearthed there the statue of Our Lady of Nazaré (Nazareth), whose carving legend attributes to St. Joseph.

An elevator device climbs almost perpendicularly to the heights and I was content to pay my two escudos and employ it; the downward ride would be one-and-a-half. I had roamed the upper town's white streets and undistinguished praças, lingered on its mirador for stunning views beneath, and was contemplating my descent to sea level when I noticed a progression of women swishing over to a stone path interspersed with steps, then swishing down.

I had been pondering whether ingress and out could be only via the funicular and whether the fisher folk could all afford its use. Here they were now...and the way seemed mostly stairs and gradual and certainly all down hill...and think of the panorama featuring that route. I wasn't balancing on my head the load that most of them supported or encumbered by their multiplicity of petticoats—if they could make it surely I could.

But ere long the stones grew more slippery, the steps fewer and the protection rounding the frequent turns in the path non-existent. Came a time when I took the curve crouched on hands and knees and backward, thinking what a fool I must appear to someone watching above. When the next bend shortly came and it was worse and I was half-way to my knees, suddenly I had a vision—but it wasn't of the Virgin. What I saw was a huddle of raucous Nazaré fisher folk picking up my pieces and shipping them to Philadelphia for burial (but only after ransom had been paid). And at that point, barely a quarter way down the offending cliff, I said Macey, about face and grope your way cautiously upward and pay the man gratefully your escudo-and-a-half....Those creatures in black and plaid swinging blithely down that hellish path may appear to you as eighty-year-old women, but they are really mountain goats—which you are not.

# # #

One day I got on a bus and headed an hour away to Obidos, for I had passed it on the train and been intrigued. Perching on a hill within its crenellated Moorish ramparts, Obidos provides a feast for both eyes and spirit from the roadside. Nor is the promise shattered once inside. Cascades of roses drape the dream village, and jasmine and bougainvillea and a multitude of other luxuriant vines whose names I never knew. Little white houses climb its pleasantly graded step-streets to the top of the hill then part way down. Emerge from the undulating Moorish walls at any point and the vista is rewarding down below where the pastoral green countryside unfolds, sending forth this delicately modeled blossom of a town.

There, in an old palace snugged into the wall, I enjoyed my best meal in Portugal, and there in Obidos I watched them weave, then bought, a tiny rug of many colors.

# # #

Coimbra, the university city. I must connect here with the Surexpress to attain the French border. Joao helped me plan the complicated it itinerary —Nazaré to Valado to Coimbra to Irun—regretting the unavoidable three-hour wait-over at this end. Oh, that's fine! I reacted, an opportunity to see the town and its famed seat of learning. But he was skeptical: the station lies outside the city, the university completely at the other end and up a hill, cutting the time pretty close.

I get the same reaction from the friendly station master when I ask where to find the bus into town: I can see he's worrying, fully expects me to miss my connection.

As it develops there is plenty of time, although two buses are required to reach the university. Not much doing once I get there, this being Saturday,

and only back below again will I meet a figure in the flowing student cape. But there are marvelous old buildings and lovely views over the city and to the Mondego River where, just as on the picture postcards, women really are washing clothes and spreading them on the banks to dry. Hunger hits me, calling for something fast and also cheap—for so efficiently have I liquidated my Portuguese currency, that only a few coins remain. In a dark little hole-in-the-wall grocery I buy a roll and hunk of cheese and, short-cutting, munch my way downhill, eschewing the bus back, favoring the greater intimacy of shoe leather slapped against those steeply veering cobbled streets.

Still lots of time when I have reached the business district, but spotting a policeman at an intersection, I approach to ascertain beforehand where to find the bus back to the station; that way I can wander with an easy mind. His response, of course, is unintelligible, and he returns to directing traffic.

I emerge bewildered, when just then rounds the corner a uniformed man I am sure was ticket taker on that first bus from the station. I noticed and remember him because he was particularly helpful when asked directions to the university, set me down at the transfer point and instructed the old gent tending the nearby kiosk to see that I boarded the proper bus. He is a giant six-foot-six and robust, with a pleasant round open face, delicately flushed complexion and gentle manner. Completely kind. He knows me too and we start in to "talk"....He asks me Blash-blash-blash universidad? and I respond Sí, sí, yo fuí and I've come back already. I ask about the bus and he smiles sweetly and nods and we walk along together. He has given up wasting words on me and presumably plans to lead me to the spot. I indicate in Spanish, not right now, please, I've still got lots of time, then ask for a book store, since in so renowned a university town that should be interesting to browse; also I've used up all my writing paper. Again he smiles down from on high benignly and we keep on moving. When I fall behind a few paces he glances back to see that I am still in tow. For some blocks we continue in this manner and all the time I'm worrying that he really hasn't understood me. When we emerge onto a bustling thoroughfare I manage to catch up momentarily, breathlessly murmur "papel para escribir," and then try "stacionario." He only nods and smiles, pink lips sealed stubbornly. Patronizing. He has me feeling like a low-grade moron. Positively maddening! But we keep moving steadily through Coimbra's busy Saturday, a silent ghostly caravan.

Crossing at length the crowded street, he cranes about briefly to check me out and we land smack in front of a combination stationery-book-shop. I obrigado him enthusiastically, wringing his hand in farewell, then duck gratefully inside, by now more to escape my silent mentor than anything else.

Having purchased my paper and browsed the shelves a little and found them unlike Barcelona's, I emerge ten minutes later to find him waiting, patient, at the curb! I show him the parcel, grin broadly, then obrigado him again and, saying I will just marcho up the street, dash across it madly. Furtively I glance back from the other side—to where the Coimbra ticket-taker still is standing, stolid yet bewildered.

# # #

Sharing my compartment on the Surexpres was a slender olive-skinned young Portuguese, at first extremely shy. His Spanish on a par with mine, he possessed in addition a small portion of French which sounded Portuguese and could understand the least little bit of English though he couldn't speak it...was studying language records. We had until nine the following morning to make the accommodation and so managed fairly well; by the time we parted in Bayonne bits of Portuguese were actually beginning to emerge

from the wooliness for me. Through a long night during which sleep came only intermittently, stretched out opposite each other, talking in the intervals, we came to know a little of each other.

Manuel was bound for Paris. There he hoped during the next three months to complete all the necessary immigration procedures, working meanwhile to earn additional funds. Afterward he would depart for the U.S., to be admitted under the French quota: the Portuguese, he said, was closed. A friend in Newark had a neighbor, a lawyer prepared to do all the legal work and obtain for Manuel a contract as a welder, his present trade, in a Newark plant—to the tune of $1500 American, exclusive of fare. This struck me as outrageous, really!—and I urged he check it fully with the U.S. Embassy in Paris before parting with his cash.

His wife and two young daughters Manuel anticipated bringing over as he could afford it, subsisting meanwhile on a shoestring—and he consulted with me on a projected budget.

What a familiar tale! All such Odysseys, men bringing over wives or brothers, women mothers, each one bringing somebody else...to America, the Goldene Medineh! But those were the old days....No, it is still going on...America, life's frontier! Wherever I traveled in Europe I encountered them. Men still think our streets are paved in gold.

Manuel, from a small town near the coast, bemoaning the three months he must spend in Paris sans Portuguese sunshine. Did he anticipate then, finding the gold of Portugal's radiant sun triumphantly piercing the smog of Newark, New Jersey? Would he likely strike gold there of one sort or another? Or a baser metal? Think, Manuel! Consider the sun.

Chapter Twenty-five: ALICE IN FRANCIA

Dear Mike, (I wrote my husband)

France again. In place of Mamita Mia and Blue Skies I'll be humming Aupres de ma Blonde along Bayonne's streets. During the week in Portugal I was muchas graciasing for five days before I could remember to obrigado, so chances are I won't be merci-ing until I land in Basel and should be danke schöning. And today is one of those deep blue Sundays when I have to keep reminding myself c'est la vie instead of es la vida. This, I note as I write the date, on my fiftieth birthday lacking precisely one month, so that today's most fitting text might well be taken from Alice in Wonderland, to whit: You are old, Father William, the young man said, and your hair has become very white; And yet you incessantly stand on your head—Do you think, at your age, it is right?

What a miserable rainy day as we pulled in this morning, but the first really nasty one of the trip. Today's jinx started nibbling away at long-standing euphoria even before I landed, on the train, when my glasses fell apart; well, that's not tragic, I'm sure I can get them repaired tomorrow and I've prescription sun glasses as well as an old spare.

Then the money situation: I had cleaned up my escudos so scientifically that I'd none left over for the train trip—in fact, after buying this stationery in Coimbra, sipping pink wine at a river-front table, hailing a taxi to return me to the train on time and then retrieving my bag from the consigne, I wound up with a half-escudo coin. (But I had some pesetas stashed away that they accepted in the diner.) One problem is that I'm running short of one-dollar bills and have very few ten-dollar travelers checks remaining—having used them brashly earlier—so will soon have to be cashing fifties all the time, wasteful when moving between countries much...but that's not insurmountable either. Then I arrive in town and it's Sunday and absolutely no place will cash a travelers check, not even this little hotel.

So I'm starving and it's pouring and after I get drenched venturing a short exploratory walk, I think what's wrong with a little nap on a gloomy Sunday, even if the first day back in France.

When I wake it's one o'clock and I'm even hungrier and it's still coming down outside my window and I've been so looking forward to a good French meal after all those fried sardines in Portugal. It strikes me that at the restaurant downstairs I can put my meal on the cuff. The coquille St. Jacques is superb, what must be Basque style, baked in a shell but first the scallops all chopped up onion-garlic-and-red peppery. The entrecôte, this being France, arrives on the raw side, but everything so tasty—bless the French!—and I take full advantage of the cheese tray. I have ordered a bottle of wine, thinking they will stash away for me anything remaining and I'll be sure to have another meal here; however, as I leave the dining room the desk clerk says it is fermé from now on, so I indicate, with proper gestures, in that case I'll go get my wine and take it up with me. And the half bottle of rouge has been a real comfort this otherwise glum evening.

Late afternoon I walked the streets again, eventually getting trapped again in a sluicing downpour. All turned around, I stopped a woman and asked directions. She led me down the street to waiting car and husband and they delivered me directly to the door of my hotel. Did I hear someone say the cold unfriendly French? Having managed a merci boucoup, I was about to hash up something like Ustedes son tres gentile, when I had, luckily, to slam the car door and move hastily out of traffic's way.

Bayonne is charming, a painting by Utrillo. Narrow winding streets, shutters now glistening and dripping many colors, mansard roofs, arcaded shops and numerous old quays provided by two rivers driving turbulently through the town. It's the French Basque capital but not large and I probably covered most of it today on foot.

There are Basque and Bonnat museums I want to see and I'll spend a little time in neighboring Biarritz, the aristocratic seaside resort whose beachfront I remember as so beautiful, its promenades, the spuming breakers churning over boulders where they stretch into the sea. I'd like too to sample the Basque villages hereabout.

# # #

Donnerstag—Und so geht das Leben. I left you, or you me, on Sunday in Bayonne, since when much water has passed under many lovely old bridges. We are skirting the northern shore of Lake Geneva, have just pulled into Lausanne station and are Basel bound. Spent the night on the train, but have just downed three cups of coffee and a couple of rolls and am reviving. Anything I venture about Swiss scenery is obviously going to sound mighty hackneyed, but who can gainsay the temptation, least of all your cornball wife! "Icy blue waters fringed by snow-capped peaks"....Ah, here comes relief from such all-pervasive beauty in big ugly storage tanks on the left, grimy smokestacks, electricity installation. Workmen along the tracks, bright blue coveralls classique, waving, I wave too. Lilacs, apple blossoms in the orchards. A trailer park along the shore, a cahmping, tres big! in Europe.

The morning sun is in champagne mood, uncorked, gushing, it inundates the landscape but it's not wasted, I lap it up. So welcome, unencountered since sparkling Portugal. Between then and now—the driving penetrating rain, horizontal, whipping Bayonne's rivers into whirlpools under my window, beneath the bridge. The frigid blast off the Atlantic at Biarritz. The sleet and scattered snowflakes as we sped through southern France past soggy Basque and Bearnais villages. Lourdes a lovely sight among the frozen Pyrenees, fascinating even for the station stop...down below, masses of pilgrims huddled in the valley in the lashing drizzle, the grotto is it?...cripples in wheelchairs at the station, and on a siding to my left in several cars nurses fussing about luxurious compartments; must be a lucrative operation with many invalids of substance as well as faith taking the cure.

In case you're wondering: at Bayonne had found no bus to get about to villages in the rain. Cut things short and took off Monday afternoon direct from a brief damp fling in Biarritz, nice anyway (and there I did have the spicy piperade for lunch). The traveler proposes, but the weather disposes. Go fight it!

# # #

Spur of the moment as we pulled into Toulouse and it wasn't raining, I grabbed my suitcase and descended, a month earlier than anticipated. It was brisk enough there, but the rain held off deceptively until I'd settled in. Actually, in Toulouse weather doesn't matter terribly: it's such a great city one forgets the weather and goes about one's business—or pleasure. Toulouse, like a smaller Paris only more intime...everywhere boulevards and malls with their sidewalk cafés, green squares filled with strollers at the city's heart, thriving market places. A busy air, political and progressive, yet there are little crooked streets to dream along too.

And such wonderful things happened to me there and in a lovely town nearby. What did I tell you about my Pollyanna Principle—it works! I give the cards a quick shuffle and Voilá! Bayonne's raw deal gives way to a full house in Toulouse and Castres.

In Toulouse I met unexpectedly with the leader of the UGT, as you know, Spain's socialist union in exile—in the city's extensive SFIO (socialist) headquarters housed casually behind an escutcheoned gateway from the l500s—and at day's end he took me home to meet his wife since she was Jewish like me and spoke English (her father a Jew from London, her mother Parisian)—all unpremeditated, a chain of events. Over the apéritifs (we were drinking málaga, he comes from there)—the talk came much easier with his wife to translate. Later, parting, so stirred up I kissed him on both cheeks impulsively and then was aghast that I'd trespassed good taste on such short acquaintance, but it was made right when his lovely wife, understanding, took the initiative on mine.

Next day I rode the train to Castres, seventy-five kilometers away. With much difficulty I tracked down the home of Juan, the Spanish anarchist refugee we've been corresponding with, which, of course, is what these two days were all about, arriving with an armload of red carnations in homage from the market I'd come through. He hails from northern Spain near Saragossa and told me much about the Civil War days, but I fear I followed only little—-is a cousin, incidentally, of the Spanish writer Ramon Sender, now in Mexico he says. He misses Spain still but would not return from exile, were there an amnesty, so long as Franco rules. How poorly he lives in his dark little room up several flights of rickety stairs! But he took me at once to his step-daughter's home, where they insisted I stay for an artistically prepared lunch they could probably ill afford to share. In the

courtyard below I took a snapshot of four generations gathered there, from the three-month old baby to the ninety-year great-grandma. Later we walked to the train together, he and I, stopping briefly at the Musée Goya the little town somehow contains, pausing on a bridge over the still Agout to contemplate the many-storied narrow old houses, their glassed-in balconies overhanging the water, the scene made doubly lovely in reflection. On a station bench we rested in quiet comradeship, awaiting my train to Toulouse.

Can't get around it—my most rewarding experiences have hinged on Spain and Spanish. Like last night, awaiting train time I was able to have a long and interesting conversation with a charming French track worker in overalls only because he spoke Spanish...lots of people do in southern France. I must say though, in France's favor are her names of streets and squares, the subjects of her statues. Toulouse and Castres both are plastered with Jean Jaurés, his statue dominating the former's city hall and the main square of the latter, named for him: the socialist heritage here is strong. And when wandering lost you can choose between Victor Hugo and Pasteur to lead you safely back to civilization; whereas in Spain, Ugh! the blood runs cold debating the José Antonios and Calvo Sotelos and you just know none of them can do you any good. (This must be Lake Neuchatel we're passing, the water pale green lavender, the mountain ranges low and rolling, the scene no longer spectacular but pleasant.)

Last night at midnight when I had two hours to kill in Narbonne between trains, the mistral was whooping it up something fierce. It's true what you hear about the mistral. Whistling and moaning agonizedly through the night, it whipped me forcibly across the road from the station in utter dark to the only refuge of light and humanity, the café. There I warmed up with coffee and a pâté sandwich, then in the interest of a sound night's sleep ordered the vin rouge of the area, unusually good for ordinaire. In a corner, several card players sat gathered at a table smoking pipes, out of Cezanne. Truly! Kibitzing was a huge and gentle St. Bernard that peered over shoulders and shook hands congratulatorily between rounds as invited. At the far end of the room a shabby little man sat getting drunker by the minute, talking up his own storm, louder, more tumultuous all the time. This was increasingly annoying the proprietor, who after he'd had as much as he could take, laid down his hand of cards decisively and rose from the game just long enough to seize the offender by the scruff and toss him out the door...'twas quite a scene. A dark-haired woman at the table next to mine had been working a crossword puzzle in a Lyons newspaper; now we looked toward each other and smiled in female solidarity. She must have known, but I wondered what obscenities the drunk was mouthing in that midnight café, in the otherwise quietude broken only by the whisper of cards being shuffled and the whistle of the mistral at the door.

# # #

Monday—Headed back to Basel from Strasbourg. You really are getting another of my continued on-the-spot communiques, like a progressive dinner: the hors-d'oeuvres in Bayonne, entrée in Toulouse, dessert en route through Switzerland...with nary a burp yet in Basel!

Am staying these several days with our friends the Bruckers in Rheinfelden, a little old Swiss village upstream from Basel possessed of myriad charms, discovered by me a couple of years ago (the summer Tony was born in Heidelberg) when a short boat ride on the Rhine out of Basel led me there and I vowed to return some day for longer than the fifteen minutes allotted passengers. By coincidence, that Christmas, you will remember, the Bruckers' card arrived with a Rheinfelden postmark, Bob working in Basel for a chemical firm. Basel itself, a modern industrial city straddling the corner where Switzerland, France and Germany touch, is full of much that is old and picturesque—decorated house fronts, medieval gate towers, street fountains, winding cobbled streets, promenades along the Rhine. And just a half hour by train from Rheinfelden, an easy commute. Am fully enjoying living in a household, after two months worth of impersonal hotels. (I beg to be allowed to dry the dishes, imagine!) Sunday, eight-year-old Ferdie and I marched off to Basel's zoo together.

And the day before—the event I'd been awaiting—I marched in Basel's May First demonstration sponsored by the trade union movement, deeply stirring. Thousands turned out to celebrate this year's specific theme: workers' solidarity to defeat the Swartzenbach Initiative coming up for a vote next month, which would cut in half the number of foreign workers allowed in Switzerland—many work here now, largely Spaniards and Italians. "Alle Arbeiter sind Fremdarbeiter!" proclaimed one poster. Another was probably aimed by the Spanish contingent at the tourist and stirred twinges of guilt in me with its "Besuchen Sie Spanien und..." inscribed above the picture of a traditionally garbed flamenco-dancing couple—their mouths extravagantly gagged. Banners galore, slogans shouted, fiery speakers in German, Spanish, Italian—and much of it I understood, my

ear better tuned, more sensitive, it seems, to that kind of phraseology. Backdrop to the speakers' platform, Basel's colorfully painted city hall facade. I came away with a little red silk tag and good feelings that somewhere there exists this kind of solidarity among workers, among people.

Spent today seeing a little of Alsace by train, basically Strasbourg and Colmar. As you know, this section of France just across the Rhine from Germany has been tugged back and forth between the two. Having run out of synonyms for quaint, charming and picturesque, will now say only, unadornedly—that I've enjoyed the day immensely: countryside, cathedral, canals; half-timbered houses carved and otherwise, their rooftops like Indian corn; the ability to make my German understood in France; quiche Lorraine for lunch in Colmar and choucroute for dinner in Strasbourg—and much white wine of Alsace in both. In Strasbourg I watched a parade of nurses in white march along the Ill's quaint, charming and picturesque banks with signs demanding better wages and working conditions.

Tomorrow I leave for Vienna, Mike, I've made up my mind.

Chapter Twenty-six: THE WELTSCHMERZ EXPRESS

Against the venture was the time it would take from my Italian stay. I looked forward to attending the Gypsy Pilgrimage in southwest France on May 24th and here it was the fifth already, with Italy still to come. But most importantly against it was the uneasy intuition that coming now Vienna would be wrong for me, would somehow disappoint.

This too: For eight weeks now I had been riding trains through Europe as though transported not on rails but winging it aboard Cloud Nine, fond again of my fellow creatures, responding to life with a purple passion. Full of piss and vinegar and simultaneously the milk of human kindness: a combination, clear to see, that given time was sure to curdle.

I was headed down now, not plunging yet but being wafted earthward. To scramble it one jot more: the bloom was leaving the apple, the worm invading it. Finding its way in at the vulnerable trouble spot of Cambodia, to which American troops had just been dispatched, expanding the war in southeast Asia and with it the growing distaste of Europeans for America's role in world affairs. I was seeing the papers regularly and hearing the radio and what German I couldn't follow was being translated for me; there was no escape. American students were protesting, striking, getting shot down by the National Guard. People dying because they were involved. And I off on my uninvolved idyll. Did I feel guilty? Or mostly put upon because the world of home was getting back to me, again was too much with me? I was finding my young hosts—good friends—unreasonably critical and hostile in discussions when we would disagree: I wasn't militantly enough for this or against that, supporting whoosis or opposing whatsis, "still living in the thirties." Oh how familiar rang the litany! Must I then offer up credentials in the human race for those intervening decades...a dues book marked Paid up to date? (Not that my stance on issues mattered all that much, you'd think, from where I stood there on the Rhine in that little old town with its storybook towers.)

I was getting back in bad shape—finding myself impatient, easily annoyed, no longer ready to shrug off the small reversals. The healing-over that had begun to form on my disillusionment with people was starting to turn raw again, to threaten suppuration. The Weltschmerz that had held me fast, then lifted, was closing in again.

It was in this souring frame of mind that I set out for Vienna to travel one of the most delightful routes of Europe on one of its swiftest, most luxurious trains. This must also have been the continent's most immaculate: deposit a scrap in the built-in waste container at your side and a Mädchen in Uniform appeared to empty it at once: you must have triggered an alarm in some deep housekeeping recesses of the train.

# # #

It was at the Zurich station that the couple from British Columbia boarded and sat across the aisle from me. He was a psychiatrist and they were attending some international gathering of his confreres in Vienna. What could be more fitting, being joined by such companions as I head for Freud's own city! Good company too for the long trip—nine hours still to go—easy people, with whom I soon fell into the shorthand speech reserved for kindred souls who understand without elaboration. There were other Americans in our car. One, a trim woman in her early forties with a high-pitched voice, in time came sailing down to where we were sitting. I had noticed her before, perched half way down the aisle on the arm of a seat. My instinct for self preservation by now well sharpened, I reached quickly for a book and buried my head in it, and she wound up seated across the way with Mr. and Mrs. Psychiatrist. "I heard you people talking English," she apprised them, then introduced herself, but I remember her only as the American Extrovert. Where were they from? Did they mind her sitting there awhile? She liked to get around, meet all the Americans, made a special point of it. (Canada, after all, is part of America, she reassured when they had found a moment to respond.)

"Those people back there," she continued, lowering penetrating voice and blond head both, in confidentiality, leaning forward so that now I had to strain to hear. "Why, I can't understand such people, even if they are from the U.S.A.—three of them, that is, the two men and the fatter woman. Now, the other woman is German or Swiss or something like that, but she evidently knows a little English...just got on at that very last stop (What was it called?) and they've been talking to her ever since." Then with a tut-tut shake of her head, again, "No, I can't for the life of me understand such people...and this is really why I left: they'd rather talk to a foreigner than one of their own kind!"

The eyes of both my friends found me across the aisle and I telegraphed back deep sympathy.

She was traveling alone, the Extrovert said, but was rarely lonely. Wherever she went she could always find Americans to talk to. And talk she did. For the next hour.

Then we were pulling into Innsbruck and she feared she must leave, but not before presenting to each of us a little sticker with name and address, the mail order kind. "Come stay with me!" she urged. "I have this empty guest room and a car and I'd just love to show you around Connecticut, just let me hear a few days in advance!" And she was off, the generous well-meaning variety of bore.

Soon afterward I headed for the diner. It was time for coffee and some of the famous Viennese pastry this train was known to stock. For economy's sake I had brought along an apple and sandwich from the Basel station, but they were long since gone, the core and wrappings long since emptied from my waste container by the conscientious Mädchen.

I took one of the few available seats, opposite a man who sat alone over a beer at a table for two but was evidently part of a larger animated group across the aisle. It happened that none of that celebrated pastry remained on board and reluctantly I settled for the universal cellophane- wrapped slice of pound cake beginning to turn stale.

But the passing scene outside my window compensated. The snow-

laden peaks with lower slopes of fir and blossom-studded meadowland between. Distinctive timbered huts for man and beast whose steeply slanted roofs reached functionally almost to the ground to channel off the snow. Then we were climbing Higher! Higher! and were up there in the realm of frozen white, and when we pulled to a stop at some small station I could see crusty footprints glittering in the sun. Soon came a lofty giant looming far off to the right and I knew it must be Austria's most majestic Alp, the Grossglockener.

I looked out the window and lingered with my good Vienna coffee and had a little talk with Macey. Then I began to feel the tensions shuffle off, the old well-being seeping back. And I said, old gal, you'll be all right again—

Vienna's coming up, Vienna, like the book says, "with its zest for life, light-heartedness and humor tinged with pathos." Let's just go easy on the pathos, Kiddo...a big helping of zest along with some of that fattening Vienna pastry, that's the ticket! And Macey responded amenably, Okay boss....

Just then I raised my eyes and the man across the table did the same. I smiled and so did he. Still very young at maybe thirty-five, he had a boyish cowlick and a placid face; somewhat less jovial, I judged, than his friends across the way.

"Sprechen Sie Englisch?" I asked for openers, for I had appropriated his table in a rather boorish silence. He didn't, so I hauled out my few German phrases and somewhat more extensive but less accurate improvisations.

The man was bound from Zurich to Vienna, where he and his pals, musicians all, would be playing a dance hall for the week. Casually we talked a little of this and that, one topic leading to another—all on a sufficiently high plane so that when invited to share a bottle of wine I broke my longstanding rule and let him treat, saying Don't be a dud all your life Macey, a bit of savoir faire as we approach Vienna. So we shared some wine and it was going down neatly and where the good Viennese coffee had merely started the well-being seeping back, with Vienna's wine I could feel it coursing through every vein, to be deposited in all my inner nooks and crannies.

Meanwhile the Psychiatrist Couple had entered the diner and taken the table vacated by the musician's friends. We spoke a little over the aisle and since the musician understood no English, they felt free to tease

about my ability to promote myself a male companion as well as the wine. Tongue in cheek and all in good clean fun.

An aura of Gemülichkeit had settled down about us four in the Transalpin's dining car when, Goddamn it all to hell! I felt the musician's leg rub up against my own. Could it have been an accidental brush and I mistaken? Under the table I felt the movement gain momentum, unmistakably. It was no accident. Pulling back my leg decisively, I ventured a look into his boyish face but, phlegmatic still, it didn't seem much changed. I had no wish to hurt his feelings, act out the moral indignation bit—just to put him on his notice I was not inclined to play. He had the right to make the overture...and I to turn it down.

I cooled my eyes and lowered the brows well over them, then shook my head Oh No! He reached across the table, covering my hand with his caressingly... possessingly? I drew it back, still unobtrusively, reluctant still to make a scene, hoping to salvage the earlier mood. But it was gone and he persistent.

There was still my grandma gambit to fall back upon. I dug into my bag and flashed the child's winsome face. "Mein Enkel," I explained. "Ich hab ein Enkel bald zwei Jahr."

The musician nodded absently, unimpressed with my grandson almost two and evidently with the senior status thus bestowed on me.

I tried another. Did he have a family...wife and children? Jah, but they were back in Zurich—shrugging them off confidently as though to reassure.

He leaned forward in intimacy, the placid quality fleeing his eyes, and it became quite clear no subtlety would work.

I said then baldly that I had no interest in fooling around... had better leave...would like to pay my share of the wine if he would call the waiter. 'Twas only fair, I thought, this last, he shouldn't suffer a total loss. At this he finally seemed deeply injured, pouted and shook his head Oh No!

I darted a glance at my friends across the aisle, hoping they would help me extricate myself. They were taking it all in, amused, and that was that. I had to do it all myself.

As I prepared to leave he still persisted: the train was due in Vienna just before nine...I must meet him back here in the diner at eight...."You will come, you'll see," he said, the over-confident bastard!

I thanked him cooly for the wine, rose with what dignity it permitted and started back through the several cars.

We came to Salzburg shortly, happy blend of a city where, in nature's setting of grace and beauty, man has placed a gem of joyous architecture. Coming just then, it served to free my mind from the recent debacle in the diner. To send it back three years to a well-remembered interlude that Mike and I had spent there with our older son and his then fairly recent wife.

Chapter Twenty-seven: SALZBURGER NOCKERL

We were on our way to brief reunion with Jeffery and Martha when the cloud enveloped us in Aprica and stopped us short, that time that Mike had won the checkers championship. It was with impatience we resumed the trip to Achenmeuhle the following day, for we hadn't seen the children since waving them off two months earlier in London as they set off, packs on their backs, on an auto-stop honeymoon.

Now the newlyweds, hitch-hiking over if not the honeymoon, were getting intensive language training prior to their year in Heidelberg, where Jeff was to attend the university on a fellowship in German philosophy.

Through the Brenner Pass we entered Austria from Italy, expecting to find the route wonderfully scenic but relieved to find it also gradual, the going easy. We had been cautioned to cross the border only in full daylight, for there were bandits still about, they said, and hard feelings and injured patriotism and all such things that cropped up on occasion, remnants of the bitterness accompanying border changes and the ceding of land from Austria to Italy. The Italian side of the pass seemed still to hold much of its Austrian Tyrol ethnic air and German speech: people don't up and move so easily in these parts, or change their way of life. We found no bandits anywhere, were held up only by the line of cars and trucks that slowed the crossing through the pass.

We stopped at Innsbruck only long enough for a swift impression of Zwiebelturms, the green patina-ed onion domes posed like a Turkish fantasy against the mountains. Then, following the River Inn we came soon into Germany, out of the Tyrol into Bavaria, all of it still magnificent Alps. The inns and houses we were passing still blooming cheerfully with painted decoration and with flowerbox, the feeling of the roadside little changed.

Achenmeuhle appears on no map I ever saw, and small wonder...but we had been provided full instructions and with relatively little blundering found the village just as darkness started to obliterate the road. A tiny shop, not open, said Lebensmittel—one of those great expressive German words, the means of life, read groceries. Among the shadowy hills we climbed a narrow ribbed dirt road, a cowpath really, reached Frau Schmidt's haus, whimsically decorated with bright-hued beasts and people, cows housed on the ground floor, our children above.

Late that night, finding nothing closer we settled in Rosenheim on the high third floor of a third-rate yet immaculate Gasthof with an enormous double bed whose mattress came in three horizontal sections for easy airing out the window, over it all the first of the cloud-soft featherbeds we now would be encountering. On the dresser stood a white ceramic washbowl trimmed in lavender blue cornflowers, its matching pitcher filled with water for the morning's cold ablutions. In Rosenheim, following those ablutions, I finally succeeded in making the druggist understand Mike's need for athlete's foot powder, by taking off my shoes and parting my toes in pantomime.

Then, the four of us reunited again, we headed down the Autobahn and for awhile each time I saw an entrance sign declaring Einfahrt or an exit labeled Ausfahrt I felt constrained to make some vulgar comment.

In Munich we did the tourist things and spent the night in hard-won hotel accommodations. Watched the animated figures circle rhythmically on top of City Hall as the clock began to strike the hour. Explored the modern art museum. Jazzy Schwabing where the youth go of an evening. The gaping outer structure of a palace whose insides had been bombed out in the war, still looming starkly silhouetted all these years, weeds rooting in the crevices, a grim reminder. Mostly we wandered through the dwindling older quarter. Hearing steamhammer and rivet gun pounding and dinning...observing giant cranes that hoisted with a creak and groan their mighty slabs of granite and concrete, their dangling girders and beams of steel...in danger often of stumbling into

excavations or getting buried as a steamshovel's yawning maws let go a load...we knew not many years remained for the old and picturesque.

On the map, not far from Munich, we saw the name of Dachau. What would it do to us, how could we stand it, could we bear to enter the town at all? Not knowing what we must expect, we knew that having once considered it we must go. Slowly we drove through the small and otherwise undistinguished town—distinguished by that one mark only: the stigma of its concentration camp. And as we passed each person in the street now of an age to warrant the inquiry, I searched each face and then demanded silently:

How was it then, Mein Herr or Frau, how did it feel for you and could you bear it? That pall of smoke, the stench of burning flesh, did it invade your town? How did you breathe it? The sounds of terror and the anguish from within sealed cattle cars that, slowing for the stop a little down the road, rolled by your town: did you hear them? How could you listen? Worse, how could you turn away and not? Or were there those among you hereabouts who sheltered and provided food, gave aid in an escape? Risked your own life and your children's? I've got to think so.

The camp itself, when we had found it in the countryside, held for me not the horror that the town had with its people. Barbed wire and a turret with machine gun and within...such tidy pebbled paths and well-trimmed lawn. A large museum with blown-up photos of revolting living corpses...exhibits and statistics and the history of Hitler's rise to power, attempting in word and picture the unbelievable tale and thus impossible task. I listened in among the German families who were the bulk of visitors to know what parents said to children as they looked and to the best I understood they were saying all the proper things. A room of dried wreaths and fading ribbons, printed streamers from around the world, this organization and that, all with the proper dedicatory phrases. At the far end of meticulously groomed and park-like grounds, the massive and proper monuments erected by Catholics, Protestants and Jews. The model of a bunkhouse (is that the proper term, or is there one?) of recent vintage, far better looking than those in children's camps I've visited. Neat and clean and antiseptic. Where were the lice, the rats, the typhus and the stink? Where on those reconstructed bunks were the barely human skeletons that had crowded the originals, five cramming every berth? Gone, into the ovens. Into the crematorium we could not see that day, was shut down for repairs they said. Repairs? My god, that monster was to be renewed, for what?

In Dachau, perhaps the worst atrocity center of them all, five furnaces has worked around the clock to do their stint in the extermination of over ten million human beings. Had done it well. But the evidence is all cleaned up now. The years have dimmed the loss as years will, of one beloved or ten million lives. You needn't be afraid to look.

What had hit me with a harder impact was the memorial come on unexpectedly some weeks before in Paris' Marais. We were wandering about, Mike and I, half looking for the old Jewish section when we turned into the Rue des Rosiers, a slum that bore the melancholy mien of a hot and dusty Middle East depopulated village. It claimed its identity with a kosher butcher shop and *was* the old Jewish section, true, but with a difference: the faces by and large were not of pre-war Parisian Jews, but rather the recently arrived Algerian variety. It was still possible however, to order a corned beef on rye at the corner delicatessen, meanwhile to talk a little with the owner in the mutual mother tongue. Then, continuing through the broader teeming streets of pushcart and café, down one and still another of the side streets housing garment workshop and historic old hôtel (the one-time mansions looking rather sad), we were still wondering to each other how it must have been for Jews in Paris under Hitler....And just then came upon the answer. Majdanek—starkly said the simple monument in that unobtrusive courtyard—Mauthausen, Treblinka, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen....Ringing its circumference, the camps of horror crowding one another so each might gain a toehold to live in infamy. In a crypt below, close darkness hardly broken, a handful of martyred ashes beneath the flame of an eternal light. And that was all.

# # #

Departing Dachau, we were back on the Autobahn through the Einfahrt, then eighty-five miles later and over the Austrian border, off at Salzburg through the Ausfahrt. But I wasn't up to vulgar observations for awhile.

Imagine trying for hotel accommodations, sans reservations, in Salzburg during the time of the Mozart Festival! Following a long and discouraging search, we were about to leave town when we came upon a pensión offering one large room that held two double beds. By general consensus we accepted eagerly. Mostly I

remember of that evening, somewhere in the heart of town, baroque white fountains splendid in the moonlight, baroque white horses leaping in the night.

Next morning we rode a cog railway up a mountainside to the Hohenzalzburg fortress, after nine centuries still standing guard. Five hundred feet below us on the plain we saw the Salzach River meandering through town, saw the encircling mountains form a perfect foil for the Zweibelturms' exuberance.

Midway in the day's activities we entered one of the small Konditerei that abound in any Austrian city. Having ordered coffee with its accompanying generous bowl of whipped cream, we were debating our various choices from the pastry counter's bewildering assortment when a fantastic three-peaked souffle passed us by en route to another table. The waitress called it a Salzburger Nockerl, said it took a half-hour to prepare. Myself I judged it from its looks well worth the wait...the Nockerl was after all the gustatorial delight of Salzburg, as much a landmark as the fortress. Overruled, I did however extract the promise we would not depart the city without partaking of its specialty...there would be time to schedule it on the morrow. Thus we wound up making do with such more modest selections as seven layer chocolate cherry hazelnut ambrosia of the gods.

Early evening, wearied by the full day's explorations, we rounded a corner to hear enticing sounds come drifting up a staircase from the Rathskeller below and with a single mind descended. In a small clearing at the heart of an enormous smoky room a modest band was playing. Crowding the surrounding tables were Austrians gathered for an evening of relaxed companionship, talk and laughter flowing freely as the beer and wine.

We would join in their Gemütlichkeit, we too would welcome such an end of day! We would, that is, if we could find a table....Standing on the sidelines feeling uncomfortable, we were rescued by a waiter with an impressive paunch who bustled toward us with his loaded tray, beery towel slung over an arm, and took us in tow toward his destination. There the half-dozen men at the table obligingly made way for us—such is the custom—and in short we were members of the party.

They were a pleasant crew and a congenial evening was on its way. The music of guitar, accordion and violin, the song that started in the band and soon was taken up at tables all about, the camaraderie that grew more surely in our own group. And the warm familiarity of my family around me.

All these happy ingredients were soon blending and mellowing, finding their reflection in the shimmering bowl of the Viertel, the goblet whose stem like a terraced Alp in the emerald springtime I clutched and hoisted with increasing pleasure. I clutched it and I hoisted, I tilted and I poured. I sipped that quarter liter of the lovely wine of Austria with the merest tang of lemon and the color of straw. I sipped in fellowship and quaffed in friendship and was draining every full-sailed ship that ever got launched. I clutched again with vigor and hoisted in abandon, then, taking solemn communion with all my fellow creatures, I tilted the Viertel by its tapering stem and poured the sacred potion down my consecrated throat.

Hosanna! Nirvana! Bebel lives! While Macey lives it up...and lives to babble. Bebel? Yes, I told my new friends all about it. How, many years ago I'd read some bits of August Bebel and how excited I had been this very afternoon to come upon a plaque declaring on that spot had once worked as apprentice that socialist theoretician. And how my impressive aptitude for their language that they all marveled at resulted largely from my Jewish background. And, though now I'm not perfectly clear on the extent of the eloquence that came pouring with the wine as that memorable evening wore on, I surely must have mentioned also my reaction driving through the town of Dachau.

I don't think my politics or ethnic background bothered any of those six Austrians. There could have been a Jew among them and there was almost certainly a socialist, considering that that party was second in political strength in Austria at the time and part of the governing coalition. And could I have consulted some handy crystal ball I would have realized that on my return visit three years hence the socialists would be the majority party in the government and heading both party and country as chancellor would be a Jew from Vienna.

Were they a little bothered though, by the fact that my ambivalence about the German people—which no doubt did exist deep down inside, rationalize it as I might and know as I knew about Willi Brandt and other German anti-fascists—was evidently carrying over into Austria? (Witness my eagerness with loosened tongue to flaunt my true identity as though to shock.) For in Austria, I myself remembered from my youth, there had been staunch resistance to fascism native and German. And the great working class apartment houses of Vienna that the people were so proud of were blasted by Dolfuss' cannon and the blood of their defenders stained Vienna's streets before the buildings could be stormed and taken, the spirited resistance crushed.

This was all in retrospect however, as I sat three years afterward aboard the Transalpin Express and sped toward Vienna and thought back and analyzed that Salzburg experience.

But on that earlier night I doubt I was indulging in political analysis. Rather, I was indulging in more of that tangy cool wine and a little off-key music as I treated the boys to my father's "Oh Susanna, Oh Susanna, Trinken macht das Leben süss..." and the drink was certainly sweetening mine that night. I know there was food being brought to table and I suppose I ate a little from time to time, but mostly I remember those Viertlach on their clutchable green stems. Though for me it had become an evening of delight, somewhere on the fringes of consciousness the realization mounted that this was not necessarily true for the rest of my family. I knew it for a fact when, having just signaled the waiter for another of the magic quarters, I found myself raised to my feet and propelled toward the door. The inexorable end was at hand.

And that was the last thing I did know that night. Next, it was morning, with Mike beside me and there across the room in the other bed my son and daughter-in-law, all eyes focused on me as I rose with unwonted freshness. They were solicitous and kind but I hadn't the faintest sign of a hangover—nor the faintest recollection of getting back to the room and undressed. Events had blacked out from the time we left the Rathskeller to my awakening in bed.

Some earlier events had evidently also blacked out. We were walking along the streets of Salzburg that morning for a last quick look before returning to Achenmeuhle, when I thought of the promise that had been made me the previous day.

"Whoa, fellas!" I said, stopping short and grabbing at the closest arm. "Not so fast. We can't leave yet, you know."

"Can't leave? Why not?"

"The Konditerei! We've got to wait for coffee time and get back to the Konditerei. You know you promised...you all swore we'd absolutely not leave town without sampling the Nockerl!"

"Oh my god! exclaimed my husband turning to the children. "She doesn't remember that either." And at my insistence they described all the surrounding circumstances so minutely that I knew it couldn't be a lying conspiracy (and certainly, at any rate, Martha would not have joined in it).

So I was convinced at length that we had indeed been served with an authentic three-peaked Salzburger Nockerl at the Rathskeller the previous night and that I had in fact eaten and presumably enjoyed my fair share. But I was to return back home, I swear, not knowing how it tasted.

Chapter Twenty-eight: SALT IN MARIAHILFERSTRASSE

Emerging from Vienna's glittering new Westbahnhof into the anonymous big city night, I applied at a small hotel across the street and just around the corner on Mariahilferstrasse. It looked fine if the price was right.

The desk clerk was polite, almost friendly, and spoke English but we never got to price. "No, Madame, we have absolutely nothing, nothing at all!" He sounded genuinely regretful.

Could he then recommend another hotel that might have a vacancy, not too expensive?

"I am afraid not, Madame." He shook his head from side to side emphatically and raised a slender eyebrow. "Without a reservation you will have a terrible time tonight any place in the city....Vienna is now extremely crowded."

But it was early May, not heavy tourist season, and I knew of no festival occurring at this time. Why, I asked the clerk, was it indeed so crowded in Vienna now?...Did their tourist season start this early?

"Oh no, Madame! Not tourists. But we have the Salt Conference here you know, and they've taken up every available room."

Ah, so that was it! In Barcelona too, remember Macey, you hit the commercial expositions—plastics and toys and one thing and another that jammed the hotels so full of businessmen. It took three days to get back into the Gaudí, have you forgotten? And here in Austria the big deal is salt...you know, the salt mines near Salzburg, the city's name itself; why, they call that whole area the Salzkammergut, estate of the salt chamber....They've been digging up salt in Austria ever since 2000 B.C.! So now the big salt boys from all around the nation are gathering in the capital, putting their heads together on ways and means of getting the consumer to salt his beer and potatoes a little more heavily. But they must have resourceful p.r. men nowadays and that shouldn't take 'em long....Go ahead, just give an ask....

So I meekly asked the nice hotel clerk, "And when will the Salt Conference be over, sir?"

"Who can say, Madame?" He looked me straight in the eye as he elaborated, "Maybe two years, maybe more. These things take a very long time, you know."

Well Macey, satisfied now? I asked myself bitingly as I stepped out into Mariahilferstrasse. What kind of a nut did he think I was, talking to me like that? I guess my jaw must have dropped a foot and I know my cheeks flushed hot and red and I'd lifted my bag and left there in a hurry. I couldn't figure that one out...sarcastic and fresh...when he had seemed so nice till then.

Nor was I able to until some weeks later when no longer in Vienna but Marseilles. I was sitting over a second cup of coffee outside my favorite café on the Cours Belsunce and had just turned to an inside page of the Herald Tribune when I spotted the item...and figuratively, at the least, I clapped hand to head in sudden comprehension! It was a brief article summarizing latest developments in the SALT Conference taking place in Vienna between the U.S. and USSR, which had opened there the previous month—and SALT, as you surely know, stood for Strategic Arms Limitations Talks. Yes, that Vienna hotel clerk was an honest individual who looked life squarely in the face. These things do take a very long time.

# # #

Whether or not I fully comprehended the reason at the time, I could see the Vienna hotel situation was forbidding. It must have been l0:30 when I finally checked into an indifferent and overpriced hotel, and that for two nights only I was warned. I was exhausted from trudging with ever heavier suitcase up and down

Mariahilferstrasse—the thoroughfare becoming increasingly anathema to me—taking frequent detours into side streets branching from it as I noticed or was referred to hotel or pensión.

The following morning in the daylight I liked Mariahilferstrasse little better. The quintessence of every big city Main Street in the world, it held little of the delightful and leisurely Viennese ambiance, that gracious curtsey of welcome which should have heralded my arrival. What it held were noisome stores, confusing shops, commercial establishments of every ilk and magnitude. Busses that poisoned the air and clanging trolley cars with human rearsides bulging unesthetically from platforms. Giant chattering ants hurrying and scurrying along the pavement, tunneling in and out of department stores, obsessed with their burdens. And crushing and smashing it all into one discordant nerve-wracking cacophony that never let up for a minute was the ra-ta-ta-tat of the pneumatic drills cracking and busting up the streets in a successful attempt to increase the peril to life and limb.

Nor could I avoid the distasteful avenue that morning, for I needed desperately to do some shopping—to join the frantic ants—before putting my mind to nobler pursuits. One recent rainy night when undressing I had found my feet black and only then realized that my faithful walking shoes had, like the wonderful one hoss shay, come apart in one fell swoop. And my likewise faithful shoulder bag, by now kaput beyond salvage, I'd been clutching clumsily in hand since early Switzerland. Two hours were consumed in mounting annoyance before I emerged from Mariahilferstrasse with suitable shoes and bag. Another chore remained: getting directed to a Schuster I left the old gray suedes—my back-up pair, with heels, that I had been relying on these last few days—to be repaired.

Shoes and bag were not my first replacements. In Rheinfelden I had packed up a box of accumulated ballast and sent it home, throwing in the knit suit. It had seen yeoman duty and even I, who am happy wearing one easy well-liked garment time and again, had had my fill of it; that suit had served me well along snowy streets and sandy strands and on several nights I had slept in it. Requiscat in pace, dear green knit. I had sought out a small shop in the village and bought a navy blue cardigan sweater and gabardine skirt. Extracting the ever-slimmer bundle of travelers checks from my bag to pay the proprietor, I had remarked jokingly, "These are for American dollars, no problem about that I'm sure, ha-ha-ha, the American dollar is always good any place, isn't it, ha-ha-ha!"

"Well, we're still taking them," he had responded earnestly, "But that may not be for very long....Swiss banks are not eager to have them." A blow to the built-in chauvinism all Americans tote about with them—consciously or not—and the first I knew that our dollar was in serious trouble overseas.

Decked out now in all my fresh finery, swinging from my shoulder the bag of shiny blue, its big brass buckle glinting in the sun, I was practically a whole new woman, I told myself as I headed toward the hopefully more rewarding older part of town. I was trying hard to shake the shitty mood intensified by the lack of interest, the sometimes downright rudeness as I saw it, accorded me by blasé salesgirls having other things on their minds than coping patiently with a middle-aged American who not only didn't know exactly what she wanted, but not even how to express it.

Where were the characteristic lightness and grace of the Viennese, the unfailing interest in their fellow man? The book had lied unconscionably!

Listen, traveling solo is easy, even delightful, when your head is in the clouds. True, you miss someone to share impressions with, discoveries, wild enthusiasms. But you grow with that lack, mature, feel things more deeply that you cannot dissipate, come to know yourself a little better when there's no one at your side to know you. The time you most miss a traveling companion, it could be, is when those black moods descend...and the tempers. Now it becomes a question not of turning to but on yourself. There is no other scapegoat, you are it. So I was taking it out on poor Macey and both of us crawling deeper into a purple funk.

# # #

The outer shape of things, at least, improved once I reached the ring of ornate public buildings, monuments and gardens which has replaced the ancient fortifications and contains the colorful old Inner City. Through the Burggarten I wound briefly, simmering down a little past formal flowerbeds and fountains, over terraces, then along the Opernring to the subterranean tourist bureau for a map and additional materials; this lay just beneath the corner of Vienna's beloved opera house, which was to become my bearing-taking center (and where one evening I saw Anatevka—Fiddler on the Roof, in German). One more piece of business and I'd plunge into the

heart of Old Vienna, start to get the feel of things, or try. Although the plunging just might be curtailed by stiff new shoes beginning to pinch and rub...as though I needed this now!

I found Thomas Cook's on the Kartner Ring, and there a letter from my husband. I tore it open eagerly, impatiently began to scan its contents. The following moment, not yet believing what I'd read, I asked directions and dashed outside to send a cablegram—too late to phone. I kept re-reading as I walked, not comprehending fully yet but knowing I must act. Re-reading and brooding and still not acting, that way lay madness! I kept dissecting phrases, turning the commas around in my mind to see if that might change the meaning. Commas leave room for interpretation, it's the colon that is so conclusive: Therefore Madame, your egomaniacal shtick have led to the following, to whit:...No, nothing so definite, but when I stopped fooling around with punctuation and looked for the person behind the words I knew they had been set down in bitter irony and their essence was deep raw hurt.

I puzzled how my letters home had brought back this response....Andthen I knew I'd been a bungling witch to write so carelessly when I was flying high. From Nazaré I had penned some offhand emotional line: it was soon after that ferryboat ride from Lisbon when the secrets of the universe and of my future life had stood revealed in all their half-assed glory. Those days I'd been writing up a storm. With no one to talk to I would write myself out and, as one does with letters, not re-read and edit, just send them off. I saw it now. I hadn't bothered saying much about the lonely needful times, had talked instead about the "fascinating people" and "adventures." I must have been coming through so cocky sure, so full of adrenalin and white wine, flourishing in new surroundings—and without him—that when I later brandished the mystique of new horizons, he read me as rejecting life with him. Which couldn't be less true, for I was missing and needing him strongly. These were things apart...at different levels. Woman needs more in her life than a well-loved partner when other components have shattered and left an encroaching void. And he had understood this earlier and given me generous support. But I had pushed him too hard with my thoughtlessness. And how can a letter carry the warmth and comfort and emotional release, the assurance of a human presence close at hand. It was two months since we had been together. I knew it very well myself, with body and with mind.

I sent the cable, then forced myself to continue down the street to ferret out the light heart of Vienna. But mine was heavy and I walked as in a bad, bad dream. Life was impossible and I was an ass, doomed and verdammt. A plague take the foolishly cheerful baroque of the plague pillar on the Graben! Hang stupid St. Stephen's Cathedral! where I banged down the earphone on the idiot commentary and left abruptly lest people passing see my reddening eyes. Damn well yon Danube Canal! which wasn't blue but bleak and gray as ever my life from here on in would be. And curse the blisters rising on my wretched feet....My demoralization was complete.

# # #

But even a bleak and dreary life needs living—twenty-four hours a day. Moving day dawned inevitably, leaving me little time for self pity. There would be no delaying: people descending from a chartered bus at the curb were flooding the tiny lobby. Scouring at once what pensións in the area I had missed two nights earlier, I emerged with nothing more rewarding than an additional blister on one of my heels. Then, through that slough of despair came bubbling inspiration: I would solve my housing dilemma and at the same time break in that gift pass. Vienna possessed a novel youth hostel, I now remembered reading, a converted underground Nazi bunker.

But when I had tracked it down I learned that hostels do not open till late afternoon—and once I had confronted that grimly padlocked stairway plunging irrevocably into the bowels of the earth, I bethought myself, Oh no! If I am to be buried alive prematurely, let it at least not be in company with Hitler's ghost—then with renewed determination searched my mind for a pleasanter solution.

And found it. Boarding a streetcar for the Westbahnhof, there at the hotel bureau, where I had had little success before, I asked the girl behind the counter to suggest a small outlying town where finding lodging then commuting would be easy and inexpensive—a nice town, one she herself would choose. Putting heads together we came up with the village of Eisenstadt in the district of Burgenland which adjoins Vienna to the southeast and borders Hungary. This time I had hit the inspiration jackpot.

Chapter Twenty-nine: SCHILFWEBEREI OF BURGENLAND

Eisenstadt came on like a soothing balm that given time would smooth away the lumps of misfortune and the bumps of dismay. Peaceful and timeless, its people serene and friendly and matter-of-fact. And its housing cheap. I chose the very oldest of the town's old Gasthofs, the Hotel Eder, Zum Goldene Adler, where for fifty schillings the room I had was sparkling fresh and neat and comfortable and everything I needed. Throwing casement windows wide I looked down on a musical comedy courtyard with umbrella-shaded tables, then for a time stood watching sun-made patterns shift on the old inn's ivy-covered walls.

Retiring the offending shoes—by now a source of agony—I replaced them with my slippers which, substantial enough, were still recognizable for what they were. In them I now walked Eisenstadt from one end to the other, easily accomplished, returning with six perfect yellow tulips from the market for my bedside table.

That evening, tempted by Ziguener violins (we were so close to Hungary) I let my slippers lead me into an extravagant situation. I kept costs down by ordering the reliable Schnitzel, a Knödel on the side, and a gemischter Salate—which in such Germanic countries comes in separate mounds of salad vegetables variously and attractively prepared. My problem was with the wine, sold only by the bottle, and that a name brand—no glass, no half-liter. Perhaps a beer? the waiter suggests. Nein, don't like beer, then never mind. There ensues a battle of wills, the waiter insisting on at least bottled water and I holding out for the free kind. I win in time, when a four ounce glass of ordinary water gets set down before me vindictively. Clearly, this high-strung waiter must be Viennese and not a Burgenlander.

I didn't get much joy from the violins that night. So on the following I try another gypsy cellar, with a beautiful headwaiter and a violinist who comes to your table and looks all soulful at you while he plays and you want to get on with the food but are reluctant to offend so you give him back full measure. Here I could—and did— get a half liter of weisse Wein. And with it...a Salzburger Nockerl.

# # #

Between those two nights complete with the plaintive cry of gypsy violins came a day of lovely melioration. It was Friday and time for the Schuster and my feet protested bitterly each time I coaxed them into those bastardly new shoes. But my very soul was blistered too and needed another day of peace and simple things. So I slapped fresh band aids on the one and catered to the deep-seated needs of the other by boarding a bus headed in the opposite direction from Vienna. Grouchy feet, grateful soul and all, I was bound for the Neusiedler See, the lake that lies in part intriguingly in Hungary.

The road leads through sunny fields past lilac and tulip, orchards in flower, vineyards—above all vineyards—extensive and small. A scarecrow in his master's castoffs. Baroque figurines that must be wayside shrines.

These things I remember, and that when we turn off briefly into a narrow lane a man on a tractor hails our driver by name and as they pause for a neighborly chat they are joined by a long-skirted parson; in a moment we are into a tiny steepled village where a wrinkled old woman climbs cautiously aboard and in the very next we are out.

We stop in Oggau to drop off passengers. Flaschenwein signs are hung on doors and outside wooden fences. Sometimes it's a bundle of greens that signifies Wine is made here and it's ready, come and get it!

At Rust, renowned for its wines and rooftop storks, a more sophisticated scene: inns and a hotel and other indications of a summer lake resort. Still no sign of the Neusiedler See.

Comes Morbisch, end of the line, a dusty village so silent and deserted it could be a southern town in siesta. I've no idea, really, where the lake lies nor how far, chance a dirt road that leads along the backs of houses. No presence but mine and the nervous swallows that dart black and white at my feet from the field on my right as I pass and disturb them. On the left runs a narrow ditch spanned at intervals by planks that end at various back yard gates. Each yard, no wider than fifty feet and less than twice the width in length, is in effect a vineyard, and I know that beyond that stretch and its small white plastered house, on the still front street hangs a sign saying wine is for sale, or maybe just a dangling bottle.

Now I have gained a road leading unmistakably toward the lake, for it is marked so. At the edge of town a farmhouse offers for sale at an unattended roadside table a garish array of once-pleasing gourds that man has made ugly. Civilization has after all found this place before me.

This thought is stopped short abruptly by a sign reading "Schilfweberei" on the front of a long low white masonry building with a loading platform running its length that stands in a clearing opposite the farmhouse. Schilfweberei? Now what is Schilf? But Weberei, how well I know it....Weberei and my Uncle Morris, a Weber in Bialystok, a weaver in Passaic in the Goldene Medineh of New Jersey. Bialystok, city of Weberei, of stirrings of revolt in textile mills in nineteen hundred five...my father, youthful revolutionary, risking Siberia to leaflet the weavers. And in a later year, my own involvement in the industry. So you see, Weberei is a sizeable piece of a passion with me, but what is Schilf!

Nostalgia, sweet nostalgia joins me at my side as I continue toward the lake, associating tumultuously in my thoughts and pondering the silent building that hasn't the look of a textile mill.

It is a melancholy road I walk, a swathe that cuts through swamp and reed and unfamiliar sounds...weird, gray-green and haunted in its desolation. About me crickets chirp their know-it-all persistence. A bullfrog on the boggy left croaks out a Stop-and-Think! command and makes my heart pound for the moment. A bird cries out its strange and penetrating call, some bittersweet demand of life that finds response inside me. Suddenly a patent leather car zooms past, raises the dusty cloud of reality, and I am reassured by the very civilization that I condemn and must escape.

Now rises from the emerald sump a patch of solid land ahead and at its further reaches shines the lake. A roadside placard on the left identifies the myriad birds that crowd the area—I had been hearing them all about me, hidden from my sight. This marsh and lakeland, so rich with bird and animal life, I will later learn is a wildlife sanctuary. And this saltwater lake so shallow that at times it has evaporated and completely disappeared!

On the shore of the Neusiedler See stands a modest resort hotel, from whose almost deserted dining room now drift the mellow strains of a gypsy violin. I settle on the deserted terrace, which is sunny and juts delightfully over the waters. Taking off my shoes I toast them for their good behavior with a little white wine.

Not many yards away a small boat anchored dockside is taking on a few passengers. When shortly it lifts anchor I am aboard as well, for a half-

hour's cruise about the lake. Along the shore we pass what I had seen from land and wondered at, looking for all the world like a stage afloat upon the water—exactly what it is, with its forsaken out-of-season look, odds and bits of scenery and props shoved drunkenly about and everything begging for a coat or two of paint. It is Morbisch's Spiel auf dem See, surely an impressive sight in summer with its brilliantly costumed operatic casts, the sparkling footlights and bursts of fireworks reflected in the night-time waters shimmering between the stage and audience.

As we go cruising past tiny islands I sit alongside the rail behind the captain's perch, where the slap of spray at my face is pleasant and the breeze provocative riffling through my hair.

A fellow passenger is talking to the captain, and listening in I learn that we are approaching the Hungarian boundary. The captain points out the buoys that mark the limit, says there just beyond them where that small boat floats it is already Hungary. (On the shore near here, I later figure out from the map, must lie the village of Andau, important escape point during the l956 Hungarian Revolution.) As we near a small structure rising from the water, I summon up the necessary phrases and myself question the captain. That is their watch post, he explains, and one had better not drift across the line, for they will shoot first and be impressed by explanations afterward. And looking, I see now where a gun is trained in our direction through a peep hole.

Just then and of a sudden the wind has blown up sharply and begins to whine and howl....Could it blow us past the wildly bobbing buoys and into Hungary! We circle narrowly round an island to veer back and out of danger and in that moment the rains beat down, lashing at us viciously, the lake churning and our small boat lurching with every wave. Carefully I follow the others to a center bench for the roof's protection, but I don't really mind a drenching...just so it gets accomplished in Austrian waters.

We come to shore without mishap along the green plush border, skirt the reeds and tie up at the dock, to find it isn't raining here at all.

When shortly I spot a small café across the grounds I experience at once and urgently the pangs of hunger. There I enjoy an enormous sausage and tall glass of wine, relaxing the while at an outdoor table. In the café's window sits a model of the old-time crude reed huts that once were typical of rural Burgenland; I note that over my head the terrace roof is lined with a matting of woven reeds, while the same material encircles its support posts.

Good use still being made of a local resource, I think, smart Burgenlanders.

When I turn toward home, the road has strangely taken on a different ambiance, no longer steeped in mystery and quaggy swamp, but luminous and sunny. On a gentle incline in the distance sits the town of Morbisch and my happy eyes reach past it, to where the church spires of still other villages rise sharp against the smoky purple hills. And somehow, though perspective should have made them taper up ahead, they open out for me instead an ever widening sun-splashed path.

Now I approach the limits of the town, where stands the Schilfweberei establishment that had me mystified. Just short of it the roadside trees have disappeared and on my left looms a field I had not seen before. Two couples working there are gathering huge armfuls of the long dried reeds which have been cut and stashed into middling piles like haystacks. I have to linger, understand their work, know something of these people—the need is back upon me.

Following the tracks made by their truck I enter the field. "I should like only to watch," I call out as I stop to gawk. "Ich möchte nur schauen, with your permission...."

The smaller of the men comes forward. He is perhaps thirty, dark, slight of build but muscular, his shoulders well developed, eyes candid and out-going in a well-tanned face. With gentle voice and courtly manner he responds with something like, "That already goes without saying," then laying his bundle of reeds atop others in the truck he approaches closer, looks me in the face inquisitively; I have halted their labors and they are curious about me too. I tell the spokesman where I hail from. He explains their work. They are gathering Schilf (!) for the Schilfweberei Fabrik just over yonder, and he points. There it will be woven and some, in fact, exported to my country. For rugs? I ask. Yes, and to be used as well above and around....It is difficult to explain to me the many uses of the woven Schilf, he says, fully knowing that too sophisticated an explanation will be lost on me. I understand, I reassure him, remembering the café terrace I've just left. He shows me how they cut the tops off, sort for size, bundle the reeds then load them onto the truck. I do not wish to interrupt, I tell him...do they work for the fabrik? No problem, he responds, "Das ist privat," they are independent, sell their gatherings to the factory where others process and weave them. I watch from the sidelines just a little longer, then waving to the quartet of handsome men and women in the field continue on my way, content.

The puzzle of the Schilfweberei stands unraveled now, unwoven. And what is more, I've crossed paths and lives with, come to know a little, a salt-of-the-earth Schilfarbeiter. My day runneth over as I leave this frontier marshland bordering on Hungary's puszta to return to Eisenstadt. And I am marching to Euphoria, again.

Chapter Thirty: EFFICIENT IN VIENNA

I had roughed out the itinerary over Nockerl and violins the night before, for one must after all see a minimum of the traveler's Vienna. Rising early, I caught the seven o'clock bus into the city, determined to tackle this day with an efficient program. I had my coffee and Viennese pastry at a small Konditerei and was outside the Schuster's door at nine...where a notice indicated that he did not plan to show, it being Saturday. I must conduct that whole efficient program in agonizingly stiff new shoes—and without assist from my fairly vital glasses, I was realizing.

I rode a streetcar down Mariahilferstrasse to the Ring, then cut across the Burggarten's soothing green to the Augustinerstrasse. Vienna was beginning to come on a little like the book said, with the old buildings decorated in ornamental flights of fancy, alabaster angels hovering in the alcoves. Soon I was immersed in the grandiose effects of the Josefsplatz, surrounded by history, and thus to the Spanish Riding School for its training session—far cheaper than the regular performance, according to a friend.

Vienna's Reitschule dates back to the sixteenth century, the last remaining center of the haute ecole of horsemanship's classic tradition and the focus for a sizeable sentimento-historical mystique. It is a must for the conscientious visitor, but not being particularly a horse fancier—or conscientious—I was attracted most, in honesty, by the Spanish in its title—all of its horses derived from Spanish stock. (These Lippizaner stallions, pure white at maturity, are said to be born black—pointing out some sort of moral in race relations, if one could only figure what.) The Riding Hall itself, baroque as expected, is a thing of impressive beauty with its great white dimensions, its multitude of graceful columns and sparkling crystal chandeliers. The performance is in reality a horse ballet—even to the nomenclature: e.g. pas de trois—with the splendid beasts perfectly trained to raise or extend a hoof daintily, stand poised on two legs, trot on the spot, leap Nijinsky-like and generally to disport themselves with utmost grace in unison or solo. I was pleased I had gone.

Afterward I wandered past the Hofburg, old city palace of the Hapsburgs, foregoing appraisal of crown jewels and tableware, content with an outside perusal. Down Kohlmarkt and into the Graben, the elegant shopping span, splurging a couple of schillings on one of the Mozartkugeln that tantalize from every confectioner's window. Later, bringing myself to rip open the gold foil decorated with the composer's features. I found within the little chocolate-coated sphere a heart of nut encompassed by green marzipan, rich and delicious. My share of the elegant shopping had now been accomplished.

Schönbrunn, the Hapsburgs' Versailles, lies on the city's outskirts. Here I was able to make my way on the Stadtbahn, Vienna's subway-surface line. One cannot visit inside the palace save by guided tour, against which I was particularly disposed this day due to foot misery grown more acute as the day progressed, but I had no alternative. Given time, I was touring those fabulous royal precincts shoes unobtrusively (I hoped) in hand, bringing up the rear. Room upon room of gilt on white or treasured Oriental lacquer decoration. How ill at ease the austere Franz Josef must have felt there in his day!—did in fact replace the richly ornamented fittings and decor in a few instances with those of sobriety. Maria Theresa, for whom it was built, raised a brood of sixteen youngsters at Schönbrunn (among them the ill-fated Marie Antoinette) and it is a fantastic exercise to picture spitballs flying among the preciosity of those furnishings. The answer of course is that the kiddies must have romped in others of the several hundred rooms we are not shown. Only forty are open to the public (my aching feet were grateful!) the remainder having been converted into apartments available at a modest rental. An enlightened approach, and can you think of a better address!

# # #

This day, I suddenly determined, would be topped off in masterly efficiency with a visit to the heights of the Kahlenberg, sine qua non of the tourist, for the promised incomparable panorama of Vienna from the terrace of the famed café where one is offered an imposing selection of Viennese pastry—and in conjunction therewith a traditional stop in Grinzing for the heartening Heurigen new wine and gemütlich song. It is suggested one go with a tour group or it might not be much fun, but I am on general principles wary of such tours and in any event this decision was spontaneous. Also, I was now rather proud of my mastery of the Stadtbahn. Examining the map—broad outlines and at arm's length due to missing glasses—I had figured out how, executing an hypotenuse, I could set forth for Heiligenstadt, at another end of the line, directly from the Schönbrunn stop without retracing steps into town; there in all likelihood I could secure a bus for Kahlenberg. Grinsing's new wine I would accomplish on the way home. Today's record achievements would certainly balance out the past few days' reluctance..

Checking with the Stadtbahn ticket seller in her little underground booth I found her initially doubtful of my plan, but attributing it to language barrier I persevered and in time persuaded her it could be done. To shorten the dismal tale only slightly, one Stadtbahn train (that circled right through town) and two busses later I was deposited not at the top of the Kahlenberg but at Kahlenberger Dorf. I had somehow misdirected myself royally— at which of a number of points I'll never know—and stood now gazing up at that face of the hill which, though it showed a road of sorts, no bus ever climbed. To attain the top my feet, those inadequate put-upon feet, must provide the transportation.

An hour's determined march had fostered inventiveness: Weaving back and forth across the road relieved the shortness of breath—but added mileage. Climbing backward appeared to counter gravity's pull and helped me breathe —but could not be sustained for long. Climbing shoes off all this time, though it alleviated blistering was knocking the ankles over, making them turn. Thus I alternated between on-and-off shoes, backward and forward, zig-zag and straight ahead. But the higher I got, the better the view when I would climb turned about, becoming so good, so satisfactory, that to persevere to the top seemed unimportant, to cold-shoulder the view a resented discipline. Particularly so when a young couple coming down had given me a twenty-minute estimate, while ten minutes later a middle-aged pair made it out forty-five.

Then it was delightful plunging freely downhill, forthright into the view upon Vienna, whose day was slowly fading overhead. At the clearing passed and noted earlier a few cars rested now, their passengers seated at tables drinking wine. I chose a location at the terrace's lower edge, where the hillside sheered away and grapevines staggered down the slope. Sat gazing over the hillside vineyard to where the storied Danube lay on one hand and Vienna on the other, sipping the delicate new wine and eating homemade cheese and bread. Sat drinking in the sun's cerise and violet-streaked afterglow where the lights were beginning to twinkle and flash, to sprinkle and splash in the mythical river. Hugging to my breast my own private view from the Kahlenberg. No Schrammel music here, guitar, accordion or violin, no Third Man zither. No Gemülichkeit reached out in welcome. But I was at peace with myself, in pretty good company I thought. And, in that knowledgeable moment, the sense of Vienna, too, that had eluded me was emerging from the wings and making its debut.

When in the dusk I resumed the descent, it came to me all at once that I was actually and truly within the Vienna Woods, the very fringes only but the

Vienna Woods. And as I gained momentum I was swooping down from the Kahlenberg's heights to rescue besieged Vienna....I give you the story: During the city's siege by the Turks at the end of the seventeenth century, the day was saved when the mighty Austrian-Polish army came swooping down the Kahlenberg to rout Kara Mustafa's forces from where they were encamped outside the city's fortifications (now the Ring). The Turks were forced to flee so precipitately they left everything behind, sacks of coffee included. When this brew turned out too bitter for the locals, sugar and cream got added. And that's how Viennese coffee was born....Thank you Kahlenberg!

# # #

I had enjoyed another Heurigen stop at the bottom of the hill, this time where the traditional green boughs marked the gate of a lantern-hung garden from which sounded an accordion—all the irresistible trimmings. Thus it was in receptive mood I sat awaiting the Stadtbahn on the Heiligenstadt platform when I saw him.

I knew myself drawn at once to the young man whose age could be estimated within months quite accurately, since the giant opalescent bubble he was blowing emerged through the gap provided by his missing

two front teeth. Moved to congratulate him on so fine a performance, I walked to the bench where he sat with the Other Woman and struck up conversation. I talked, that is, but rather than enter into discourse, in subtle subterfuge he blew his bubbles ever more effectively, caused them to burst with ever greater fury, then broadly grinned his artless perforated grin. The child was gratified, I sensed, to have a fresh, unjaded audience: his companion had no doubt long since lost all admiration for the act, had indeed the look of one who with just another explosive pop could lose all tolerance as well.

The train arrived and we entered an empty car; the woman chose a seat a few rows forward of me, but the boy came to sit directly across the aisle.

"Ah," exclaimed the woman gently, a wise mother who understands her son is about to sever the cord. "You wish to sit near your Dam-e!..."

I reached into my bag, handed him two sticks of my own brand, then I tried bubbling one myself, but without success. Now he stretched his mouth wide to demonstrate the tongue's correct position, then followed through with the arching of the lips.

In another moment he had blown a real phenomenon, leaning across the aisle to me triumphantly as it swelled to outsize proportions and took on gleaming echoes from the ceiling lights above. It hung there just inches away, irresistible, an evanescent fantasy in chicle stretched to the child's resilient limits of reality. Knowing it doomed in any event (along with all things big and small) I let my poking finger fly and jabbed the ephemeral stuffings out of it, shattering its fragile essence all about his lips. I was not violating childhood's dream but sharing it, and he knew the gesture for what it was.

As I turned to wave from the platform shortly afterward, I saw him squunched up against the window; drawing back sufficiently to perform he blew a giant bubble for me and, as the train began to pull away, apt student, punctured it swiftly himself with a darting finger.

# # #

I reached the bus station to find I had just missed my ride to Eisenstadt and had a three-hour wait until the 11:30. What could I do in such good humor but pronounce So be it and make for the heart of Vienna across the Parkring. I needed more time in the very oldest, the medieval, streets that twist and turn and this ill wind provided it. My feet were behaving and my spirits high. The air was soft with May and I was mellow as I strolled through medieval squares and alleyways, then along the canal. Above, in a dark blue plushy heaven the sentinal stars flashed and signaled their contentment. Old man's in residence tonight! they sputtered...like the royal guard they passed the good word. And in the murky charcoal gray Danube beneath them, ripples echoed a refrain: All's right with the world! they lapped up lambently against the bank.

In a small café I had some verlingerte Mokka, the gratifyingly specific term I had soon learned was employed by Austrians for my watered-down coffee, and, at last, my Sacher torte. An hour prior to bus time I turned to head toward the station at a leisurely pace; I would sit there quietly and rest, had already attained today's quota of adventure. And if things had not all gone exactly as anticipated, well, to be successfully efficient in my Vienna would after all be sacrilege.

Coming to a crucial corner and perplexed which way to turn, I drew out my city map. But lacking glasses I found it useless to search the fine print among the maze of fine drawn lines and there was no one to ask directions in the dark and silent street. Stepping off the curb, still undecided, I was standing in the deserted intersection awaiting inspiration when I felt a firm grip at my elbow. I heard a politely murmured, "Erlauben Sie?" and simultaneously found myself steered across to safety. For, do you remember, I had cast my bread upon the waters in Sesimbra from a winding coastal road.

His rough tweed sports coat was what I noticed first about him—it must have brushed my hand. Then, as we emerged together on the opposite curb, I could see by the light of a street lamp a remarkably nice looking young lad of a medium blondness with dark gray guileless eyes. These were made more direct by the pronounced straightforwardness of tapering dark brows. There was a quiet assurance in the way he had come directly to me in the street and taken hold, yet a shyness in him too that I noted in his voice when he asked if he could help. A kind of sing-song rhythm to his speech said he was not a Viennese, and true, I later learned he came from a small town in the vicinity.

We started walking toward the Landstrasse station, where he too was bound, but when shortly he learned much time remained until my bus we turned and headed the other way toward the canal. I was asking many questions as we walked and before long we had slipped into the "Du" of informal speech, making life less complicated for me.

We talked about Austrian politics and I was trying hard to understand and he was serious and well-informed. His political persuasion was my own, we found, and then another bond united us as well as just plain liking.

I asked his age, then guessed before he could reply. "Why you're not much older than a son of mine," I made a point of saying, for perhaps he hadn't got a good and sufficient look back there in the lamplight.

At that the rough tweed arm went round my waist more firmly than I thought it ought, in silent comment. Reaching about I captured his hand to remove it, but smiling, so he would know I liked him still. Then, when it felt so delightful to hold, the holding so carefree yet secure, why I just held it...and hand in hand we crossed a bridge to where he said it was the Prater. We wandered through the festive park that once had been the emperor's hunting grounds, through plump balloons and paper spills of wispy sugar spun out to roseate fantasies and all the rainbow carnival things and the May time air was lively all about, but with a joyousness, not garish. We passed young men who sauntered holding hands with their young women and seeing them I turned and asked, "How is it that you spend this time with me, when on a Saturday night in May you should have at your side a girl of your own years?"

He looked at me with level eyes of artless gray and solemnly shook that sweet young head and said, "Das spielt keine Rolle....."

I laughed into the night, "Oh Du bist süss, sehr süss, my sweet, sweet, süsser Jungen!" I couldn't help it, standing there beneath the Prater's giant ferris wheel...I turned and softly touched the lips that just had said, That's not important, woman's age...it makes no difference, plays no role. Sweet liar and quick thinker but a comfort! how those lips were sweet...süss, süss was all that I could think to say. And then he drew me close insistently, for I'd encouraged it I knew, and I must shake my head, smile and say Nein, nein.

The time, I said, 'twas moving on and I must make that very last 11:30 bus, we'd have to dash to catch it.

Why must I take the bus, he asked me gently; must I return to Eisenstadt tonight, and why?

Because, you sweet young baby, I'm already paying for my room there....And when his eyes showed hurt that I had been so flippant: "And mostly 'cause I've got a man at home Ich hab sehr lieb."

I turned to politics again as neutral ground and in a little while enquired, he wasn't really active in politics, was he? Then erred in adding, just an observation, "Du bist mehr verinteresiert in spielen Liebe, nein?" And when he laughed agreement I could see those so-white milk teeth that had tasted wondrously sweet there on the Prater.

I must not seem to nourish what I knew would never be, so I got brusquer as he dawdled...perhaps he sought to sabotage, to make me miss my transportation, make me spend the night in town. Muttering phrases in a tongue he did not understand—how rude that was!—I pushed us through deserted streets on toward the bus.

We reached the station and I gave him tacit leave to quit me now and seek companionship anew. Nein, he'd stay and see me off, then take a bus wherever he was going—he pressed the hand that I had offered him for shaking. held it fast—unless I'd change my mind and stay? Gray eyes looked sad...but the youth in him looked so resilient....I shook my head and smiled with my older Spielt-keine-Rolle eyes and touched his fingers to my lips so we would part good friends.

We started to exchange addresses like new-found friends on scraps of paper, but were interrupted by the bus's being gunned and I must flee, deserting him, and never know his name. I hailed the driver from the doorway, gesturing frantically not to leave without me as I hurried down the numbered lane. Boarding the bus, I laid the twenty-five Schillings in his hand and breathlessly advised him, "Eisenstadt!"

"Stadt eisen!" he sang out, the nice old joker!

"Jah mein Herr, Stadt eisen," I agreed.

In the solitude of the bus's dark interior, I settled back in the seat just two behind him, his only passenger, slipped off my shoes....Cleared my mind of its excitement, forcibly, let it rest awhile. Then felt the day come

edging back, demanding entrance, clamoring for review. I let it have its head (now, did I have a choice?) and it came tumbling, gliding, sweeping to the fore. Well all right then Macey, I insisted, let's have an orderly marshaling of the facts as we drive on to Burgenland.

One o'clock and the touch of the driver's hand on my shoulder. I wake with the classical start, conclusion towering full-blown in my mind: CLUCK OFF you who scoff, "The virginal pick-up!" A boy and a woman shared a sweet hour tonight. Which in these horrendous times is no mean accomplishment.

Chapter Thirty-one: EISENSTADT'S TURN

They were already shoveling in the Suppe mit Knödel when I joined the burghers in the courtyard at the hour of noon. I had slept late in deference to Sunday and lounged about and then been drawn by the clatter and hum and spicy goulash odors floating through my open window. Seated at a table in full sun, the sheltering orange-red umbrella tilted back, I had my fill of Hungarian salami, Burgenlander cheese and verlingerte Mokka, then set off in my slippers.

Today is Eisenstadt's turn with me. Alternate days in Vienna are plenty for my feet. And my psyche.

This town wears everywhere a simple unassuming garb of buttered-

biscuit yellow which it trims out nicely with overtones of rusty red. The scheme, seen so repeatedly, is Eisenstadt's essence.

Everywhere too is Haydn. The town is full of Haydn, obsessed with him; he is to these people what Mozart is to Salzburg, their white-haired boy. On tiny Haydngasse stands his modest home turned museum, among several old houses in a restrained baroque or the soberer Biedermeier style.

The great honey-colored Schloss Esterhazy which dominates the town is itself dominated by Haydn. Its concert hall, the Haydnsaal, still used today in season, is exhibited to the stranger proudly as the locale where their genius composer entertained his patron with inspired offerings. I was shown through the hall by an amiable young woman who unearthed the key in a little office off the courtyard. Bitterly she accounted for the absence of furnishings about the palace, the Russians (there 1945-1955) having liberated some three thousand pieces. But they couldn't commandeer the Haydnsaal's splendid walls that gild their pristine white, or the startling ceiling like a winged art gallery of well-hung paintings hovering three dimensional in the moldings framing them, their tales mellifluously told in sea blue, sky blue, ochre, umber and honey. A lovely room. The palace taken in its entirety is a little down-at-the-heels, but friendly. A sizeable section holds civic exhibits, part just stands there growing seedier yearly, and in yet another quarter lives an Esterhazy descendent who handles wine. Esterhazy was at one time a great aristocratic and influential name, its bearers among the richest of Hungary's nobility, but you would hardly sense this in Eisenstadt, where it lives on, to all appearances, by virtue largely of the impecunious Haydn.

In time I am visiting the Bergkirche, a squat yellow fantasy of a little church that had been my first encounter with Eisenstadt as I stepped, that first time, off the Vienna bus at the entrance to the town.

In a crypt at the rear of the church among tall tapers lies Haydn under cold white marble. All is hushed solemnity, except for the drone of a German-speaking guide touring a group of visitors. He is probably repeating the titillating ghoulish tale of Haydn's head, separated from his body for a century and a half. Soon after the composer's death it was stolen from a temporary grave in Vienna for study by phrenologists. Whether in the process they discovered the essence of musical genius we are not told, but for long succeeding years it got tossed from Tinker to Evans to Chance in a macabre ballgame, ran the gamut of repeated disappearances, deathbed confessions, bequeathals and law suits. By then no longer head but skull, it spent fifty years in a glass case on top the grand piano in Vienna's museum of music, where anyone so desiring could finger and maul it....Alas poor Yorick! Finally, in l954 during the Vienna music festival it was borne to Eisenstadt in triumphal procession.

Leaving droning guide and hushed respectful visitors at the splendid marble tomb where Haydn's corpse lies united happily at last with skull, I make eagerly for the front entrance of the cherub-studded cinnamon-sprinkled sunny citron pudding of a church. Wherever an angle presents itself, there the exterior is embellished

with an angel of great charm in yet another pious though pleasing posture. The church proper with its nave and sanctuary is unremarkable; not so the route I travel in another moment, little knowing what's to be expected, through a spooky blacked-out tunnel. I have barely adjusted my eyes to its dark and started up the intimidating path, when I do a startled about-face to demand of the ticket seller, "What is she doing in Austria!"

"Ah, die Schwartze Madonna?" he rather shrugs it off. Nobody knows why she is dark and she is certainly not a native. It can only be, he concludes, that she found her way here via the Turks at some point in history.

Now begins the ascent of the Kalvarienberg, where in its dimly lighted caves exquisite full-size figures enact the stations of the cross, These lifelike models, it is said, were fashioned and painted over two hundred fifty years ago by Franciscan monks assisted by the peasants.

Up to the belfry the Calvary winds, providing an outlook over the town's expanse of creamy buildings roofed in the typical red. In the coming dusk they fade out toward a Zwiebelturm at the farther end of town and elsewhere are halted by the hills

Descending in the open air, I spiral carefully down the path around the russet dome precisely as one peels an orange for dessert in Barcelona. At each few steps new vistas open out—the houses of the town where lights spring up in welcome, the fields now turning sepia, the slumberous woods that hint at dusk-dark secrets. And every time I round a bend another angel stands revealed, posed boldly and set off by every view against the darkening sky.

Enough light remains me to return to the inn by way of the peaceful Schlosspark, through tangled woods, along a still creek and thus onto a stately terrace, now peopled only sparsely. In a meadow just beneath I lower myself to the spongy grass to rest awhile against a softly rounded bush and am soon beguiled by a subtly spicy fragrance. Plucking a tiny cluster of yellow blossoms I am still inhaling their intoxication when I gain the Schlosspark gate.

There, posted prominently, the Burgermeister's Manifest throws me into panic as, studying it in the lamplight, I learn that for "Abbrechen von Zweign and Pflucken von Blumen" an "Ausmass bis l000 Schillings is levied, and that the culprit "verhängt werden kann."

Whew! The quite considerable fine is punishment enough...but hanging! I glance about in apprehension: no Burgermeister, no witnesses, a narrow escape....Stealthily I pocket the offending bloom for subsequent secret disposal down the hallway toilet of the friendly Goldene Adler.

# # #

It is a gargantuan meal I amass before me at their table shortly afterward, having nodded to the familial Oma seated behind a counter and placed my order with her youthful granddaughter. In the middle of my table sits the basket of rolls which customarily spends the day settled there and is reckoned out anew each time a client pays his bill. Near it lies a sheet of yellow paper, its message printed in rust-colored ink. Leaning back on my bench against the wall beside the gleaming green ceramic heater, typical in these parts, I begin study of the German text and am immediately gratified to be hailed as Liebwerter Gast. "Since you do us the honor of coming," it reads, "we wish to acquaint you with the history of our house." The Griessnockerl-suppe arrives with its good chewy Knödel.

"In the official ledger of the royal free-state," I am informed, "it is stated that on September fifth of 1772 the Adlerhaus was bought by our ancestors for six thousand gulden and twelve ducats.

"In 1823 the original owners promised their daughter Elizabeth to Joe Stach and when Elizabeth became a widow she gave the inn to her daughter Elizabeth Eder." I take time out to smack my lips in anticipation as they bring on the Rindfleisch garnishiert, a handsomely arranged trayful of hot sliced pot roast of beef surrounded by green peas, green beans, white beans, mashed potatoes, pickled potatoes, pickled beets, pimento and dish of gravy—together with the Viertel of Schankwein, the white wine of the inn.

Picking up again on the begats: "In l861 Rudolf Eder gave the business to his son Rudolf Eder.

"In l903 City Commissioner Ferdinand Eder took it over.

"Despite all historical disruptions, the bourgeois house of Eder can be proud. Among its guests were the Crown Princess Stephanie, hereditary Count Stephan and many aristocrats, High Chancellor Dr. Seipel and

many politicos. The list of prominent visitors could be extended to the present day, but lack of space precludes this....

"After the defeat of 1945 our house came under Russian control." To offset this sobering development it helps to pitch into the Malakofftorte mit Schlag, a beauteously fragrant rum cake crowned with clouds of puffy cream, before persevering toward a happier turn of events:

"In l952 the daughter of City Commissioner Ferdinand Eder, Risa Eder, married the inn manager Hans Frohlich, who was trained in the Hotel Sacher in Vienna." I splurge five Schillings on a verlingerte Mokka—the high cost of which contrasts dramatically with the three Schillings for my soup, twenty-two for the main course, eight for dessert and six for the quarter liter.

"Since then the house has been expanded and modernized," I read on, grossly expanded myself by now, even if not modernized, "and today the Goldene Adler counts among the top bourgeois hotels of Eisenstadt." But I will not let that word intimidate me!

"We remain a restaurant and hotel which lives up to its old reputation." And well deserved it was and is, I am convinced as I stagger up the stairs to bed after pocketing two crusty Kaiser rolls stuffed with pot roast for tomorrow's lunch.

# # #

So pleasant a life could keep me lingering indefinitely to alternate the stimulus of adventure with a revivifying easy peace. Let the new week's start, like a besom of Burgenlander reeds, sweep clean to get me out of here! I have already over-stayed my time, procrastinating. I will not make speed toward the Italian border however, without succumbing first to the Danube's spell: shall therefore leave for Linz by train late afternoon and, setting out early morning on a river steamer, return to Vienna tomorrow after dark...I've worked it out.

Since the Goldene Adler served no breakfast, I settled my account and departed the inn in ample time to take coffee at a neighborhood Konditerei, then found it closed for Monday. Arriving at the bus stop still needing coffee, I looked hopefully both ways along the Pfarrgasse. Just down the street stood a Bakerei. Pastry shops served coffee, would a bakery?

Hope receded as I reached it, but having come this far I entered the tiny shop with its barren atmosphere, set suitcase down at the foot of the old wooden counter. In a glass case on the wall behind it, a few shelves held loaves of bread in spartan supply. These were the sole province, it appeared, of the Austrian bakery; not for it the exquisite buttery Viennese pastries, rich and elaborate kuchen and torte. The only impingement on this Backerei's austerity were the three or four cardboard cartons resting on the far end of the counter, their contents of obviously uninspired commercial origin, pressed out impersonally by giants of stainless steel. Not even the bread got baked on the premises, or where were the beckoning yeasty smells? Here held forth the most minor of middlemen, from day to day and hand to mouth. There was so little to be said for this stringently arid slot on a small street in Eisenstadt.

Except for the pale blond woman in short-sleeved flowered cotton housedress who, entering now through a door at the rear, strikes a spark between us.

I must purchase something, or what am I doing here? Pointing to the carton of fluted macaroon bars, a piping of raspberry jam down their flinty middles, I ask for four.

We are letting the spark catch as she remarks on my suitcase—the ten o'clock to Vienna?

Yes, and where I come from is America, Philadelphia, it soon evolves, and not far from New York.

"Is it near Chicago also?" she asks, has relatives living in Chicago.

Chicago again....Yesterday as I passed the book store's modern plate glass window in the old Rathaus building...yesterday, with the book store closed for Sunday, my eye lit on Studs Terkel's Chicago and I felt my insides chug, for my mother and his had been friends in that city long years ago. "I come from Chicago, I was born there! Where do your cousins live? What part of town, can you tell me?"

"I have it written down, their address," she replies, motioning over her shoulder to the door beyond the counter. She thinks a moment, makes her decision: bus time is a bit of a way off and we have things to talk about.

She seats me at the round wooden table in a room it is apparent serves as parlor also. I have interrupted her morning's ironing at the board that stands adjacent and as we begin to stoke our little fire with exploratory looks and conversation, working carefully she finishes up the shirt with the heat remaining in the iron.

"Oh yes," say I, "I do like Eisenstadt, jah, sehr viel indeed; it is a friendly town, relaxing."

"Ach, but you should have known it in the days before the Russians came and ruined it. So lovely then it was, our town...." Shirt completed, she mounts it on a hanger, buttons it meticulously, suspends the hanger from a doorknob. Out of a jug reached down from the commodious cupboard above the sink she brings me now a generous glass of wine like molten garnets, sets it down before me on the oilcloth. Her own, from the vines in her back yard.

New to me, wine on a morning stomach: refreshing, even if not coffee. It leaves a little pucker in the mouth but not a sting.

Handling it gently, from a drawer in the sideboard she lifts a respected possession, the well-worn, bulging, brown imitation leather picture album. We sit hunched over it together, peering at three of her cousins posed on the stoop of a pleasant stucco-covered bungalow on Chicago's southwest side. Tucked into the page is the latest letter that they sent at Christmas, still urging her, as every year, to come. Verfallen jetst!... too late, she should have made the break when they left, allowed herself to ride their tide. Now, blue eyes faded, hair more gray than blond, skin slackened, a creepiness under the eyes, at the throat, those tight little horizontal lines along her brow—she sighs for all the years gone by that she has dreamt golden sunlit dreams about Chicago.

Do not think this woman garrulous. No, she is self-contained with that Burgenland matter-of-factness, with a quiet dignity that permeates alike her ironing to complete a started task and her brief sigh for a lost Chicago. But between us had sounded that lusty symphonic chord of humanity shared and we both had recognized it. And I had grown to my maturity in that Chicago where a son lived now and had the lovely red-haired child whose photo I was sharing with her. And at ten o'clock in just brief minutes I'd depart her town forever, taking the sigh and dream along with my small blue suitcase. So over the imitation leather album the frustrate years come tumbling; then to my "Why too late?" she responds with the matter-of-fact acceptance now in command, while little wry wrinkles begin to enclose only half-smiling lips as though parenthetically, downgrading their importance: "In December I'll be fifty."

She would be fifty too, this woman I liked so much. I sought more closely, probed reflectively her face, her heart. What constitutes a woman nearing fifty? Does she bear uniform stigmata? Shared with the vast, the universal sisterhood? How did I impress myself on her, when I'd be there in two weeks time? (If we aren't all patterned alike at forty-nine, at seventeen, at six, why so at fifty, Macey little fool, it holds no adverse magic....) "I shall be fifty too," I tell her, "a half year earlier than you. It is not so late a time, we must not let attaining fifty hold us back from life," my earnestness in danger now of turning fierce in the face of her surrender. The fact was not at issue that she had lived her life thus far, it might well be, overwhelmingly for the better in Eisenstadt and not Chicago; it was the principle that mattered… anathema!... to respond ever meekly with the debilitating scourge of resignation to the gauntlet of desire.

She studies a fold among the yellow blossoms of her lap, strokes it smooth, smiling the while with a little soft shrug in her patient pale blue eyes that says more elaborately than language, It is not the same for the two of us, my American sister....

The album again. Two strapping sons, one drives the bus just down the street...I have two also! Three handsome grandchildren...she outnumbers me.

I write out my address in case she makes it to America or encounters a Chicago problem I can help with and, drinking the last of the wine, rise and return to the little shop. Suitcase in hand, I extend my other in farewell and then am moved to kiss her cheek. "Du bist sehr sympatisch!"...So moved I forget the proprieties of thee and thou, but I don't think the Backerei lady is bothered: we have lived up a lot of friendship in twenty-five minutes.

# # #

The ten o'clock bus is crowded, so crowded I have had to stand through several villages. The kindly woman who insisted on resting my suitcase at her feet together with her own considerable share of packages, is now about to leave together with her daughter, makes certain I will take her place. Another woman in the close

vicinity files in gratefully beside me. Soon afterward I draw the small packet of cookies from my handbag, appetite stimulated by the wine, extract one, then remembering my manners offer her the bag, insisting. Predictably, this starts us talking while we nibble.

Like me, she is Vienna bound; must visit her brother-in-law, perhaps her company will cheer him a little. But she seems herself in need of cheering. Two months it is now that her sister died. Think of the tragedy, she says, for her mother who at ninety-eight continues hearty but has buried three children out of six....Vierklich ein Tragodie! feels her mother.

Her sister was seventy when she died...and she herself must be more than sixty, is tall and spare, black hair streaked gray pulled back severely from the long face in a bun, an air of intellect about her. They had been very close and it was a bad way that the sister went, of crebs.

Of crebs? The very worst way, she says in elaboration. Crebs...the crab is cancer on the horoscope.

She gropes in her bag and dabs at moist dark eyes with the linen square. My hand consolingly on hers, I murmur So geht das Leben, turning the talk to other channels. She travels occasionally to Vienna to shop, the woman tells me, but stays clear of Mariahilferstrasse, whose tumult upsets her. (Ach, so!) Vienna, she says, and this whole outlying area, was far lovelier...you should have seen it before the Russians came—the damage they did! What a great day when they had to leave...but the Hungarians, they still are saddled with them, must suffer the Russians still. She has relatives in Hungary even now, remembers from her early youth when Burgenland was part of Hungary and her poor sister attended Hungarian high school. The district has been Austrian for almost fifty years now, since the people elected to become so in a plebiscite.

My companion is a teacher, smart, easy to talk to; somehow we understand each other's language well. I query her on politics.

No wonder I had been confused, unable to follow newspaper headlines. Things were in a state of flux. Vienna had long had a Socialist administration, now so did Burgenland. As for the nation, in the March elections recently past the Socialists had won but a narrow victory and must invite the Peoples Party into coalition. Barely two weeks ago coalition talks had blown up over programmatic differences regarding housing, taxation, intensified social reform; now, presumably, an exclusively Socialist minority government had been formed, but no one knew how long it could exist. Not having fully believed I would get to Austria, I had done no preparation and knew myself abysmally ignorant. I asked about religion, found Austria, unlike Germany, overwhelmingly Catholic. Well, I questioned...the women of the provinces...were they then church-going Catholics and at the same time supporters of the Socialist ticket?

"Many are," she responded, "knowing such policy to be better for the people. And only seldom do you find a man who goes to church. Both attendance and influence of the Church, in general, are very low."

# # #

I went directly to the railroad station to deposit bag and coat in a locker, meanwhile re-checking schedules to Linz. By the time I reached the Schuster's it was noon. The sign on the locked-tight door informed me he took lunch, the elusive one, from twelve to two-thirty. A blow! I simply had to have those shoes this afternoon, the last one I was spending in this city, who knew, perhaps for all time...last chance to get them out of hock. Ruefully I marched about my rounds in unconventionally slippered feet, envisioning the while a series of impossible stratagems to retrieve, after leaving Vienna, my only comfortable footwear.

Nothing was working. The stop at Cooks for mail was fruitless. The underground tourist bureau saw no need for advance boat reservations. The call put through to my husband at the post office—I had tried hard on Sunday from the inn without success—after a full hour's efforts by the cooperative clerk met also with defeat: the line, they said, was out of order.

I stood at the Schuster's inhospitable door, once more frustrated, at the indicated hour. Waited fifteen minutes.

At the newspaper kiosk adjoining a woman arrived, presumably returned from lunch, unlocked and rolled up the grilled metal front, resumed her Gescheft. Purchasing a pack of gum, I requested information on the Schuster's whereabouts. With him one never knew, she said, he should be here. I recited my tale of woe, pointed to slippered feet. The woman stared down at them, then raised uncaring shoulders.

Down the block, I spent some minutes at a delicatessen window studying herring in profuse variety, sausages, a round of rye bread that must have weighed a hundred pounds. Returned. No Schuster.

Fuck you! I breathed disgustedly, then swiftly reconsidered....No, that's much too good for the likes of you, you exasperating Schuster....And hied myself to the middle of the block where stood a coffee house, for I'd be better off to bide my time in comfort.

I had happened on the real old fashioned kind you read of as traditional in Vienna, yet in all those days I hadn't found another. No expresso machine, pastry display, fountain, sandwich counter, nothing but a plain little old coffee house. With mostly old men at the marble-topped tables, buried engrossedly in their newspapers if not involved in one of several earnest conversations being carried on in scattered locations about the long narrow room. I seated myself on musty bottle green plush most assuredly in place since Kara Mustafa ran off without his sacks, and ordered verlingerte Mokka of a dignified elderly gentleman. The sleeves of his white shirt he had rolled half way to the elbow and he wore a short black vest and a somber bow tie at his throat. Walking a little stooped, he returned very promptly with my coffee. It arrived on my own little round private tray, which carried as well—wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles!—a glass of unsolicited, unanticipated, unwrangled-for ...crystal clear cold water. He reappeared shortly, considerate lovely man, to hand me a newspaper neatly coiled about a roller—one of nine dailies published in Vienna—and in this way I learned that Walter Reuther had just been killed in a plane crash.

This time when I returned—would I give that dilatory Schuster!—the door stood open. There he was behind the counter, daisy fresh from a better than three hour lunch and siesta, banging away with a carefree charm upon the anvil of his trade.

"Lady!" he exclaimed indignantly as I entered, "whatever kept you away so long?" He tossed and shook his handsome curly head over my intransigent delinquency. "I thought you'd never pick them up..." his black eyes flashed in chiding disapproval as he reached behind him to the shelf and presented me with my dear old newly half-soled gray suede shoes.

Chapter Thirty-two: VIA DONAU-DAMPFSCHIFFAHRTS-GESELLSCHAFT

Through the window from my seat aboard the 4:25 to Linz the day was shifting much too soon to evening, threatening to turn lugubrious. Looking out upon it, my wandering eye discovered on the platform just below a burly mountain of a man like a wrestler, dark sideburns heavy and unruly. He was smothering, to all intents, a relatively little woman in an extremely ardent leave-taking. As she strained tip-toe to receive his embrace her already abbreviated skirt climbed ever higher until it seemed she might momentarily disappear, as in that grotesque Goya, swallowed up by his enthusiasm. When at the final moment she climbed aboard, by some miracle intact, he swung a suitcase after her, then stood four square in adoring concentration while she passed from sight through the door of my car and reappeared in the seat that faced me. They waved and smiled, gesticulating lovingly through the window pane as, once underway, the train proceeded heartlessly in a widening disjunction.

Almost at once the deluge came. The "one last magnificent view of famed Schönbrunn Palace" I was unable to get as we fled the city was not the first promise on which the book had neglected to deliver. The view ran instead to impenetrable gray drear beyond the sheet of rain that slathered down my window with the train's increasing speed. Seeking an alternate interest in discreet appraisal of my neighbor, I noted that the beige knit dress she wore was as low-cut at the neck as it was high-cut at the hem, but this all to the good, for she had both upper and lower endowment to accommodate the cut. In between, her figure, once perhaps spectacular, was slowly thickening through the middle as she approached the later thirties.

Pulling out a compact, studiously she tucked a teased strand of auburn hair back into its intended heights, bared her teeth momentarily for inspection, then touched up a make-up job that didn't really need refreshing. I had meanwhile pulled out a brochure to bone up on the Danube, and we sat thus in impersonal silence for a full-half hour.

Somehow we later got to talking; perhaps when the conductor made his rounds it became apparent I was American. In excellent English she led off with the usual formulation: did I like Vienna?

Oh yes indeed...and I added how great too I had found the Burgenlanders.

With this observation she took vehement issue, exclaiming, "Oh, then you don't really know these people! You cannot know then what a character they have...." Whereupon she proceeded to enlighten me, to fill me in on this girl she once knew from a small town in the province. "Something over five years ago I worked with Trudl in a beauty shop on Mariahilferstrasse...you know the street, no?

I knew the street.

"Mostly Trudl did the manicures: she was not a woman of great talents. Well, every Friday night she would return home to Burgenland to stay the weekend with her mother, and every Monday morning she would bring back to Vienna a pot-full of meat and five Knödel that were to last her through the week. It is hard to believe, I realize, but this is a fact: not one Schilling did she spend on food the whole week long. What money-grubbers they are, those Burgenlanders—such a backward character they have! All they ever think about is saving money. It never comes to them that life is to enjoy." For an interval her head wagged disapprovingly over such provincialism, then she continued: "Now with me it is far different. I like to live...what else?" She raised her shoulders expressively.

"This very Saturday my husband and I went out to dinner with another couple. It was absolutely lovely that dinner! And not so very expensive either—only 195 Schillings; now that isn't dear at all, don't you think?"

I was impressed. Virtually eight dollars—more than my whole day's budget. But that was not considering the three meals each day for months that I was eating out, while they were splurging on one Saturday night's entertainment. At home that would not have been extravagant.

She had tucked away in her purse, by happenstance, the souvenir menu, and seeing it I had in good conscience to agree it was not overpriced. Three kinds of wine they had been served, champagne included, and afterward a liqueur. In the food line too the menu had clearly been more lavish than adequate.

Encouraged by my interest, she now proceeded to tell me her story: Her trade is that of hairdresser, but since such earnings in Vienna had been so inadequate, she has found a job as waitress at a bar in Linz. Though it means she can only be with her husband for a few days every other week, it is a necessary evil. As a waiter in Vienna his take averages thirty-five dollars a week, all of which he spends on cars, which he is mad about—this not expressed vindictively, but rather as one relates humoring a child—while she is able to earn double that in Linz. The hitch now is that her boss keeps urging that she sit with unaccompanied male clients as well as serve them liquor. To this she has replied with the Austrian equivalent of Screw buddy! that's not my job; and her husband—I should see him, he is very strong!—has threatened to travel to Linz and break her boss's every bone if he persists. If she can only stick it out a little longer though, she has ambitious plans.

And here I am confronted with that familiar formulation: There it is, my Chicago again, am I acquainted with Chicago? She has been told about, virtually promised, a job as hairdresser at one of Chicago's top hotels, where she is assured one can pull down $350 a week. Practically all of that she will stash away, returning to Vienna and her husband after a year with money enough to establish her own beauty shop; then they can live together happily ever after, presumably dashing about in jazzy sports cars to his heart's content.

Comes the big question: It shouldn't be difficult to save most of that $350 a week in Chicago, now should it?

Well, I say, dividing the question in two as I caution myself, Heavy on the tact, Macey....In the first instance, that sum sounds rather high for hairdressing even in Chicago, out of line for even so superior a hostelry; is she sure of that detail?

Yes, but a good part of it in tips, I must remember.

Of course. On then to number two: She strikes me as fond of the gay (and expensive) life and Chicago holds much along these lines; she will also find living costs higher there in general than in Austria.

Well, I must remember she'll be concentrating all year long on just working very hard and making money. Will return home late at night dead tired, not interested in amusements. Might even take on a second job to eke out the desired income. She certainly does not require much to live on, won't think about pretty clothes and her appetite isn't all that big.

Tact, Macey, above all tact! So I respond reassuringly, "Well, if you can live on five Knödel a week you might just make it...." Then I remember there aren't many Knödel in Chicago, but am mercifully tactful and keep it to myself.

# # #

Arriving in Linz, I was absolutely unable to dissuade the woman from befriending me—nothing short of outright rudeness could have done it. Her first reaction was that being an American I must have the very best hotel in town. Persuaded otherwise, she still knew just the place, a reasonable little hotel across from the station; I must hop into her cab and she would drop me there herself. Just point the way, I pleaded, I can get there myself, I'm awfully good that way! No...captive once more, shades of Mérida! The driver had barely maneuvered the car around the station than we were at the hotel. But the vacancies were not. Again I struggled to escape her charity. But it was implacable—into the taxi again, it was the least she could do in this relentless rainfall, would expect no less from me were our roles reversed on the streets of Chicago. However, since she must change clothes and hasten to work, let the driver but drop her first at her apartment. Having arrived there after a considerable distance, she settled with the cabbie up to date, instructing that he take me to another hotel suggested at the first and on no account desert me until I had been properly disposed of. His helpless charge now, I was meekly standing by as he negotiated on my behalf and emerged with a double room at

double price on the high fourth floor, said to be the very last accommodation.

Following the evening meal I lingered in the Gasthof's dining room over wine, there being no place much to dash to in the rain at the hour of nine. Across the sparsely filled room at a corner booth sat several young men wreathed in smoke, shuffling and dealing and playing out cards in a game the waiter said was Schnapsel. I'd have given much at the dreary moment for a partner at gin rummy.

Next day I woke too early under the Nibelungenhof's featherbed. Outside my window a gray reluctant dawn wanly streaked the darkness overhanging shadowy rooftops. A shed shared the Gasthof's back yard with several apple trees whose blossoms had been largely shattered by the rain, still falling steadily.

Descending as early as was decent, I was the surprised recipient of a soft-boiled egg that appeared at table in an elegant porcelain cup with the breakfast I had ordered. Its delightful strangeness came like a snowfall to a Fiji Islander and I savored it as he might a snowflake on the tongue.

Two hours later, having been reassured several times that the boat habitually left Linz for Vienna regardless of weather, I took up my full complement of luggage—the Heidelberg bag—anchored a plastic rain hat firmly under my chin and departed the inn. I paused at the corner to look about and take my bearings, when—go ahead and guess!—there not a block away on the left stands the railroad station....A twenty-five Schilling fare and five Schilling tip away? Oh Saint Christopher preserve this infidel from the well-meaning protectors one encounters riding trains, whether gazpacho or Knödel eater!

# # #

It was a murky Danube whose khaki-colored crest I rode downstream aboard the paddle steamer of the Donau-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft. Inside me rang nonetheless melodically my week-long theme song, even though in concert for the first three hours of nine with the steady contrapuntal beat of rain.

Fortunately, the most scenic stretches of the river we would reach when the day had cleared, and what was earlier in part obscured by weather I had help following from a descriptive map. It was on this I noted soon after leaving Linz that on the left bank sat a town called Mauthausen, a name I had encountered on that monument three years earlier in Paris' Marais; undoubtedly the site of the one-time concentration camp. Who needed further dampening of the spirits....Quickly I put my mind to other things about me in the river.

The traffic on the Danube is interesting in itself, as I had found it on the Rhine, would find it on the rugged coast of Norway some weeks hence and as it no doubt is on any waterway that is a vital thoroughfare for industry and commerce. And the Danube is Europe's most vital. To have vineyards and castles and fanciful abbeys form the backdrop lends exoticism to its workaday routine, but the latter does exist and is important. Rising in the Black Forest, our Danube is the Donau as it flows through Germany and Austria, the Dunai parting Czechoslovakia from Hungary, Duna as it drops south passing Budapest, Dunav in Yugoslavia and likewise where it forms the Bulgarian-Rumanian border; straining northward through Rumania toward its Black Sea rendezvous the river becomes, fittingly more romantic in timbre, the Dunarea. It certainly traverses many sinuous folds of the Iron Curtain.

Several coal barges flying hammer and sickle passed us bound toward Linz. And later, when I had got to talking to a young South African couple, the man said Russia had sent some warships up the Danube on a "friendly mission" (the quotes in his voice) to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of their withdrawal from Austria; looking hard we could not find them. Interesting was a ferry that plied between banks, propelled by nothing more than the river's own swift current and held in line by the simple trolley overhead—such as I had recently boarded in Vienna to bridge the canal and two years earlier used to cross the Neckar at Neckargemund near Heidelberg. Passing through the locks, especially, you get an intimate view of the river's traffic, gauging meanwhile the water table's rise or fall as you line up some distinctive outer part of the boat with a level of the lock and sight as a painter does his proportions.

At lunch, over sausages and wine in the dining hall I struck up conversation with a Swede who was helpful with things to see and do in his country; he advised speaking English, not German, in Scandinavia, for the bitter memories, he said, are a long time dying.

The day had cleared and the beauty of the Danube Valley became visible, when we entered the Nibelungengau with its echoes of the Nibelungenlied and Wagner's Ring and Brunhilde. From here Margrave Rudiger of Bechelaren led the host of the Nibelungen down the Danube to the court of the king of the Huns, and

it is from Bechelaren that the little medieval town of Pochlarn on the right bank has its name. Along both banks here every year at the summer solstice the arrival of the Nibelungen is celebrated with pageantry, fireworks and great blazing bonfires.

In the Nibelungengau and in the Wachau following after, they say the loveliest segment of the whole long Danube valley, our paddle churns its way between banks enlavished with beauty, natural and manmade through impressive ages: medieval, gothic, renaissance and often overlaying them, baroque both earlier and relatively recent. Maria Taferl, pilgrimage center. towering from her cliff. Castles proud and castles ruined, parish churches, steeples, spires. High on a craggy crest, a fortress ever on the ready.

Ivied inns at the riverfront where we dock only briefly, a cobbled square with shaded benches, statued fountain, apple trees in blossom. Dwellings with the soft glow of the centuries on them climb a hill beyond, their timber silvery, their stonework ecrued yellow, brick faded to a rose-flecked dusky beige.

In the distance a Zwiebelturm, orientally exotic. Then come steep vineyards stepping up the hillside, wine country of the Danube. Orchards, the blossoms having dropped, gestating peach and apricot.

Close-in wooded hills and far-off mountains frame abbeys famed and storied that punctuate both shores; at Melk, jammed solid on a high rise like a confident crown that fears no unseating, the Benedictine monastery whose fanciful baroque takes its place among the world's most magnificent.

Dusk on the Danube and the peace that seeks me out finds me at ship's railing. The wind has risen and the air grown cold. I muffle my head in sea-colored wool and at the prow in the heart of the blow stand watching the night settle onto the river, lights blinking on to define the shore and farther hills. Vienna floating toward us. Saturday's Kahlenberg, a luminous beckoning from the top I did not reach. Stars just emerging overhead, Vienna's lights already blazoning their challenge in a twinkling constellation. Forward, the several bridges glitter bright with promise and one by one we take them, gliding beneath to achieve the city's fairyland fulfillment. The way I feel Vienna now in all my senses—the spectacle of light there on the right that is Vienna, this city that it took awhile to come to love—fulfilled at last the glittering promise.

There just beyond, still other lights of Saturday's adventure, sputtering, sparking on the Prater's giant ferris wheel, singing the irrelevance of woman's age, spinning out in diamond pinpoints to a rhythmic Spielt keine Rolle, spielt keine Rolle, spielt keine Rolle....

I must express my churning self to someone, turn exclaiming to the woman just appeared beside me—could be she is churning too—"Ach, das ist sehr eindrucksvoll, wie eindrucksvoll ist das!"

Jah, 'tis impressive a sight, she agrees with an eager nod, "Jah, und sehr romantisch!"

# # #

I should have preferred a non-existent overnight train directly south and into Italy, but had at any rate worked out an acceptable alternative that would allow me to spend the night in travel. This way I was avoiding the abomination of another Viennese hotel hunt. The plan was clearly in mind as I disembarked at the DDSG river port...would bear me west tonight toward Innsbruck, provide a few hours early Wednesday morning in which to see the town, then carry me through the Brenner Pass and into Venice late afternoon.

Some hours remained for covering the distance, though considerable, to the Westbahnhof; the rain had left a freshness in the streets and I was curious about this quarter, had never penetrated much beyond the canal to its parent body. I would set out on foot.

And so it was I came upon a block of the workers' flats I had looked for in vain in the heart of the city, in time discovering only few and fleetingly in what must have been working class neighborhoods and suburbs. I was too early in the season for the New Vienna tour that covers public housing and the other municipal services with which the city long ago became a pioneer and model in the field of social welfare. And my Viennese sojourn had been so disorganized, I so disgruntled, I had left unexplored other channels that might have provided insight.

In a general way I knew that following the first world war the Socialist city council—considering every individual entitled to a good life and it the function of government to help them get it—had tackled with a will the city's most urgent need of decent housing. Spacious well-planned blocks of flats resulted, with extensive open space in sunny courtyards, lawns and playgrounds, and such facilities and services as nurseries, child care centers, laundries and dental clinics. By the time of the Nazi debacle in l934 when the city fathers were thrown

into prison and concentration camp, model flats in the heavy tens of thousands had been realized. A law safeguarded other tenants from private landlords' rent increases and arbitrary evictions. The shocking rate of infant mortality and tuberculosis threatening Vienna in 1919 had been cut dramatically by governmental creativity in housing and other services. Vienna marched vanguard proud among the cities of the world. And since 1945, when in the first post-war election the Socialists came again to leadership, again confronting an enormity of problems in the wake of war and in addition Hitler, the social programs had been intensified; close on a hundred thousand new "council flats" had since been provided, with financial assistance to as many more existing housing units.

Not far from the Prater, between river and canal, I was now passing a block of such council flats, called to my attention by the colorful murals of their facades. From buses I had earlier caught fleeting glimpses of others: In Heiligenstadt on Saturday night, one called the Karl Marx Hof. And on the city's outskirts en route to Eisenstadt, an extensive group: "Wohnhausanlage der Gemeinde Wien—1931," said one, and some from 1968, with still others no farther along than steam shovel, mortar and brick. And each one I passed would explode my remembrance, thrust me back into that pageant of commemoration, aged fourteen again, in a chant that started out: Vienna's streets are red with blood and rubble rots where homes once stood...and in conviction ended: We're coming back, we're coming back!

# # #

Soon afterward I passed a window filled suggestively with barrels of local wine. Inspiration: why not pack a bottle for the long night's journey as I 1had seen others do, perhaps to share with fellow travelers in Gemütlichkeit, at least to put myself to sleep. The man obligingly pulled the cork.

Oh you anticipating heart, fouled up again....That gemütlich ride to Innsbruck, I regret to say, was not to be, the adjective entirely inappropriate.

The two men sharing my compartment I would judge of middle class and upper middle age. Though they appeared unacquainted they certainly looked alike, down to the count of hairs remaining on balding pates, their generous midriff proportions, the watch chains draped across sagging chests and the proliferation of chins as they buried their heads in the very same Viennese newspapers (no doubt conservative). There was much rustling of the latter, little conversation. How could I break out my bottle in such inhibiting circumstances?

Around midnight they took turns going down the corridor, to return with stiffly proper suits exchanged for softer slacks and pullovers. With the efficiency of long custom, they drew all the shades of the compartment and proceeded, as I watched in fascination, to pull seats into position for a comfortable night's sleep. (Theirs, that is.) The Austrian train's first class compartment is ingeniously constructed: grasping the individual seat by its front edge, one yanks it across to bridge the aisle, the upholstered back swinging down after and carrying along its little pillow. It is thus possible to create three more-or-less beds at no extra fare. When they offered to fix mine up that way I let them, and I couldn't very well refuse the dousing of the lights. But I never could quite bring myself to spread out flat as they were doing. There I was, stuck for the night, plastered bolt upright against the cold hard wall, legs flat forward, on either side a proper Austrian gent stretched out, four stockinged feet that pointed at my head unashamedly proclaiming their owners' honest masculinity. Had all considerations of modesty and such stood in danger of succumbing to my weary spine's insistence, my nose would not permit it. And then the snoring, both gentle and stentorian.

While me, I could not rise to walk into the corridor. I could not reach the bottle in my bag for solace. Flesh mortified, bones calcified, I could not sleep—not even toss!— in that position. Ye gods, it was an endless night!

Yet only seemingly, for shortly before seven we reached the Tyrolean capital. Checking my things at the station I set out to walk the town of Innsbruck, planning to return for the ten o'clock to Venice. Before that departure however, I would again attempt a phone call home.

Taking the way somebody pointed me, I came soon to a defeated looking Triumphal Arch, gateway to the central Maria-Theresien Strasse with its much-photographed perspective of an imposing range of Alps. Reaching the heart of the old town, I drifted about the lifeless early morning streets in a foggy daze, feeling like a dishrag with a year's continuous service at a truck-stop diner and wishing I could find one of the latter. Discovering at length a coffee shop just opening for the day, I emerged somewhat refreshed.

The post office to which the waitress now directed me was familiar from three years earlier, when, en route to Achenmeuhle, Mike and I had stopped there. A quick reminiscent surge as I swung open heavy doors and found the very counter facing me, felt Mike beside me almost, the touch of home upon me in a needful moment. A politely helpful young man put through my call as I stood by with insides queasy. Almost at once, Mike sounding sleepy but far from cross at being wakened was accepting the charges eagerly.

Off I sauntered from the phone booth, feeling fresh and revived. Now with enjoyment I am poking through the old town, but with a quick poke, for I must not miss my train. A lemon colored palace, all about it medieval being crowded and amended by baroque. Ancient gates and walls enclosing dim courtyards and attenuated streets shut away from the sun. To contrast, formal gardens, broad airy boulevards, pathways winding outward to the River Inn where mountains rising steep across the water form a mighty backdrop for the vari-colored tapestry of ancient houses on its bank.

Again that fabulous arcaded strip. Ahead, the Goldenes Dachl, gold pure gold! roofing through five hundred years a royal balcony where Maximilians once looked down upon the square. At the corner house, a fairy tale of pink and white, of curving bays and joyous scrolls. Elsewhere, carved legends in the stone, lacy metal tracings swaying with the breeze to name the several inns. Sculpted figures in the niches when you think to look up high above the arches in the street.

The window of a musty shop: a weathered Hausfrau carved of wood and painted, her arms about a babe, in place of robes and halo an apron and a shawl, her face far more expressive of the earthly joys—but there is no doubt she is the Austrian Madonna.

Now comes an end to wanderings, for the time approaches for the train to Venice....Where a whole other land awaits my pleasure, a whole new phase to my adventure—who knows what lies ahead!

Least of all I, as I make for the platform. No train to Venice today, lady—the railroad strike in Italy; today is the North's time for shutting down, they're taking turns. Oh no! This can't be happening to me! Well, Macey, they've a right to strike and no doubt good cause also. Because you're somewhat inconvenienced is no reason to lose all sense of proportion. In the fullness of time it will matter to you little...and this too shall pass...it will press itself out, as Mama used to say.

At the station's hotel bureau I requested one of the little inns in the arcade and was referred to the Weisses Kreuz, peaceful and friendly, old honey-colored chests and rockers in its hallways polished to a sheen.

Seeing the bed I confronted my exhaustion...and my emotional overcharge. Made short shrift of washing up and settling in, hauled out the wine bottle from my yellow leather bag, flung off my clothes. I opened wide the casements on a silent court, took a giant lingering swallow of the potent stuff, then yielded up the cool touch of my body to the seductive featherbed and sweet oblivion.

Chapter Thirty-three: CIAO ITALIA

Italy came on in sharp flashes, disjointed, scenes rush by me much as the time did.

Venice. Step off the train and from the station, watch or you land in the drink. I had to love Venice. Everywhere the water, sometimes murky, admittedly not sparkling with the mountain stream's clear purity, but shimmering nonetheless with palaces whose outward dissipation and decay cloak an inner marbled glory. Depths reflecting everywhere the exuberance of the people as they scramble through fish market and musty alleyway.

Venice and Mrs. Friedlander from South Africa. I am alone in the dingy little lobby of my excessively modest pensión—this time I've overdone it!—lurking at the unattended desk for information that I will not understand, when she wanders in through the open door.

"Do you sell milk here?" I am accosted unexpectedly in English by this woman in prosperous flowered silk suit, her knobby fingers well supplied with sparklers and the narrow watchband at her brittle wrist also glittering with chips. She is newly manicured and coiffed and tinted and bears her probable seventy years briskly.

I see she has come through the wrong opening off the street, thinking she was entering the tiny food shop just next door, an easy error. I explain and, checking it out quickly in my pocket dictionary, suggest she ask next time for latte.

"Oh, latte!" she exclaims, searching my eyes, a spark of watchful humor lighting hers, "in Yiddish a latte is a patch...."

"Yes, I know, and in Italian it's how you ask for milk."

A widow who does a lot of traveling, she is in Venice en route back home to South Africa from Tel Aviv, where she attended a cousin's grandson's Bar Mitzvah.

"Quite a trip," I remark, "South Africa to Israel and back for a Bar Mitzvah...."

"Well, I have the time. Might just as well be doing that."

Italian food disagrees with Mrs. Friedlander. "Greasy, gives me heartburn. I'd be better off in Spain. There I'd have the runs for a day or two, but to tell you the truth, I'd welcome it. I'm always glad to get cleaned out." So after a week of constipated heartburn she will sit out dinner tonight with a bottle of milk if she can find one—has anyway to spend the afternoon and evening packing her three large bags and arranging to have them carted off to the station tomorrow without slip-up: "Porters are so unreliable in Venice."

"Three bags!" I let loose without thinking, having learned but little since the night of the DPA Kid. "If you traveled light you wouldn't have to worry."

"My dear," she returns, taking in with a keen glance my drip-dry printed dress and unbejeweled sweater, my undeniably unadorned presence. "I can't travel with less—got to have my self-respect, the proper outfit for every occasion. When you start getting on in years," and she is good enough here to include me in her tone, "you've got to use everything you can lay your hands on to get people to put up with you—clothes, jewels, money, everything, y'understand? Otherwise, who's going to pay you any mind! It's bad enough to be old, but not to have anything going for you...." Expressively she hunches narrow well-clad shoulders.

Despite the absence of sartorial propriety she has detected I have going for me, Mrs. Friedlander is sad that we did not find each other earlier. "What a shame! Nobody to talk to for a week, and just when I meet someone I've got to leave."

"Yes, unfortunate...too bad," I murmur, then shortly have to call her back from the street to the lobby's counter where she's left her handsome alligator pocketbook.

# # #

Venice in the soft night, a café table in the Piazza San Marco, strong black demi tasse sipped to the rhythms of an outdoor orchestra. Strolling home, canals lit by moonlight and stars and the little lights strung along boats like Mrs. Friedlander's diamonds. The Rialto bridge. I mount to its peak, stand gazing down to the swirls of liquid romance phosphorescent in the wake of gondolas floating by. An accordion sways, sentimentally Italian. A clear soprano soars beneath me then is wafted back, diminished yet sweetened by the intervening distance. A signor poling through the sympathetic star- streaked waters offers up his mighty operatic heart to the empathetic heavens. Impossible to be alone on such a night! Ludicrous. A night for love and lovers. I yank myself away, head back to a lonely bed.

Emerging from the bridge into a trinket-strewn market place shut for the glorious night, I have paused to search my map for the proper turning when a little dark man halts at my side. I had noticed him earlier, on the bridge. He says something in Italian, of which I catch the respectful tone and a word or two resembling Spanish. I ask directions to my landmark, the railroad station. Just so happens he is headed that way too, will lead me there. Ay! in for it again....I don't know how to turn him down, and anyway it seems innocent enough. Or does it? I am wondering when he leads me into a canyon of shadowy deserted street, though the moon and stars are harmonizing elsewhere still. I urge him please let's go another way where it isn't quite so dark, in which he humors me, turning to make a longer trip of it. By now we have worked out an accommodation for communicating, he with Italian and German (almost a second language here, apparently), I with Spanish and German, both of us with lots of gestures.

He drives a ship of some sort for a living, or so I infer from his "Schiff" and clamped hands riding to and fro in a semi-circle. That figures: his bright black eyes gleam in an outdoor face darkened by sun and roughened by the wind.

The narrow streets are hung with banners scarlet with the slogans of election year. I ask how he will vote. He bends an elbow, clenches his fist and probes the resulting muscle. "Socialist, what else!" he exclaims, "I am a worker!"

He informs me next that he is a celibe, dwelling on the word to lend it significance—che-lee-beh—and brandishing a ringless finger with a shake of his head. I understand the man is a bachelor, though what's it to me...? He glances down at my ringless hands and starts to get happy, but laughing I assure him I, on the contrary, am married indeed. He is really a sweet little man, especially when we are walking well-lit streets.

Will I stop with him for a beer? he enquires, the solicitous host. No, don't like beer. Then a coffee instead, how will that hurt?

No Signor, grazie....A desperate first time lie: my husband awaits me in our hotel room, he will worry!

His unbelieving look, askance, the skeptical toss of shiny blue-black hair. But by now we've gained the bridge that crosses the Grand Canal to the railroad station and I put aside his offer of further escort, insisting he himself keep to this shore.

Firm handclasp, Arrividerci! to the Celibe of Venice....So what's another night of celibacy to us both, how will that hurt! I wave and scurry across.

# # #

Nobody pinched my bottom in Rome, not even that. No little anecdotes of Rome. Only pungent disembodied stabs at the vast layered spectrum I could not begin to know in a scant five days. Overwhelming! Where to begin?

Where to begin or end in its recollection? How great the temptation to let it go in its entirety....Pretend (a coward!) that I never wandered spellbound through the Palatine or sensed her cryptic presence in Livia's House....Does the world need yet another panegyric on the Colosseum? But you would detect the hole in the fabric, so I must dredge it up and hold it to the light and try to give, if just a fragment, some cohesion.

Suppose, then, I talk about a day that started off with Vicki. Vicki was a student at Philadelphia's Tyler School of Art and spending the year at their campus in Rome. She was the daughter of friends at home and, though we really hadn't known each other, was generous enough to come running when I phoned.

Now she, I am sure, got her bottom pinched plenty in Rome. How appreciatively they turned to stare and whistle and mouth their sexy little mutterings as she walked beside me down the street! She moved with an unaware rippling grace, was small and exquisitely modeled in face and figure, jauntily mini-skirted and black and truly beautiful.

When Vicki asked what I preferred to do that day, I replied without pondering, the Sistine Chapel...get the most from this art student's knowing guidance. And so we set out to take the bus that would bring us to the Vatican, a goodly distance off from my hotel. Well, there wasn't exactly a strike in city transportation: call it a slow-down—this Tuesday's bus drivers' slow-down demonstration. But effective enough so that we shortly gave it up and started in to walk. Now, walking too involved some uncertainties. Though true of most days through the time I spent in Rome, that day seemed especially one of parades and demonstrations of the city's public workers. To cross a main thoroughfare in Rome is at its best a tricky business: few traffic lights, but you, the pedestrian—if wise, with eyes clamped shut—maintain the right of way as you tread the zebra lines; cold comfort, still, from a slab in the city morgue. Just now it was impossible: one stood the additional hazard of being run down by a Roman phalanx of determined welfare recipients, trash collectors or city auditors. Anyway, it was too much fun in the streets, too exhilarating to leave behind—shouted song and slogan, flaunted banner and the stalwart determination of the people to achieve their demands. (What wouldn't Spain's workers have given, I kept thinking, for the right to demonstrate in this open way in a democracy!)

So a whole lot later Vicki and I wound up instead at the Piazza Navona. Here on the terrace of the Tree Scalini we indulged in the obligatory chocolate cherry ice cream creation known as a Tartuffe, meanwhile looking out on the grandeur of Bernini's fabled fountains where they leaped and flowed and effervesced their marbled bounds. And we never made it to the Sistine Chapel after all.

But when I did at length arrive there on another day, I was fervently glad to be alone. And when, in the middle of that vaulted hall where the blessed rise and the damned go down, where one should enter only unaccompanied and keep apart, where to speak or even whisper is a travesty against that overwhelming work of man, the ceiling and the walls of heaven...when, in its midst, two matter-of-fact American couples in chic travel garb came up against each other with a Fancy meeting you here and extended chat—then I fervently wished that I for one would not meet someone there I knew. To look up silent at that awesome ceiling was a very personal thing, a co-mingling of man and art, and the closest a sinner like me will ever come to praying. Then when later I made myself leave and wandered down the corridors of the Vatican museum, distracted still, when I paused to inspect some charmingly clumsy folk art it came as comic relief, and I had no business doing it after the Sistine Chapel.

I never saw the insides of another Rome museum: they were shut down by strikes of the attendants when I tried them, but since the Vatican is a separate political entity its employees were not affected. (In the same way, though Italy's postal strike was on, I could mail a letter from the Vatican.)

Even the outdoor museums were not functioning. When Vicki, due for class, left me that Tuesday till another day, I descended to the Metro. Rome's would-be imposing subway-surface system has had a devilish time developing past its impressive but nonetheless only city station, stopped short at each attempt when it struck underground ruins of sacrosanct historic importance. Thus, while it has undeniably made significant archaeological contributions, the Metro has not provided the modern Roman with a citywide system.

It does, however, run to Ostia Antica. These ruins, a mere fifteen miles away, I had been told were as worthwhile and interesting as Pompeii's, which I would not be visiting. After a half-hour's blundering about the vast underground network I boarded my train. Several officials had at various points attempted to dissuade me from my goal, but since this was all in Italian I followed not a jot of their reasoning and out of hand ignored it as irrelevant. Finally one of them gave up and sold me a ticket, another gave up and collected it, and I was triumphantly off to Ostia Antica. There I was in time dumped—no, in truth descended of my own free stubborn and opinionated will—in the middle of desolate countryside, along a little-traveled highway. At the kiosk which was the only sign of life, I bought a bag of peanuts and asked to be directed to the site. Here too the man began to carry on, waving his arms about and shouting, "Chiuso! Sciopero! Chiuso!" and turning to mutter about me

rudely to the woman at his side, who was shaking her head in ready condemnation. At length however, he too, like the Metro guards, threw up his hands, then pointed me down the deserted highway. Naturally, when I reached the gates they were closed for the strike—chiuso for the sciopero—with only the picket on duty to turn me away from the shady evocative pine- and cypress-studded grounds. Down the road however, a sultry little cluster of present day village about a massive fifteenth-century castle provided a couple of other historical layers of atmosphere to rescue the occasion. Augmenting the afternoon's experience further, I re-boarded train to continue on to Ostia Lido, a pleasant beach resort where I walked happily along the ocean promenade.

It was dark when I returned to Rome. I ate delectable pickled mushrooms opposite the Trevi Fountain, deposited my coin and wished my wish, then tramped about the city getting lost, ending up on small café-lined streets that brought me to the Pantheon at midnight in the moonlight, not knowing what it was.

# # #

The girl who shared my compartment to Perugia was a very sexy looking number. Her full lips shown tenderly moist and scarlet with the covert promise of more exciting parts to come and her round black eyes were mascara-ed, blued and penciled into a perpetual surprise that she had not yet been taken up on her generous offer. She could have been a hefty forty, fifty pounds overweight, but she was tall and bore herself well on a sturdy frame. As she sat legs crossed, there showed virtually crotch high a pair of solid thighs like country hams. But her outstanding feature was a pair of full-blown breasts that strained against the striped red silk of her blouse and hurdled its neckline. They seemed to flower and expand with her every breath as I sat opposite, entranced.

Now if I reacted that way, imagine the boys....The bony-faced youth found her first while making his voyage of discovery early in the trip. He poked his horsey head into the doorway, stood staring avidly for several moments with nostrils breathing fire, then tossed his dark mane and high tailed it on to spread the alarum, returning shortly with an acne-pocked companion. For a full half-hour we got a constant stream and afterward the incidental passerby, who also turned to gawk. But my neighbor, who had to be noticing the traffic, remained completely unperturbed. Neutral. She did nothing to encourage, nor yet discourage; no squirm, not a sign to indicate awareness. On the young men's part, no words, whistles, overtures crude or amorous. Just those stares—and occasionally one would jab another in the ribs in silent comment.

Let me tell you though how wrong can be a first impression. I had at the outset rather written off her companionship—this based solely on appearances—yet it was as friends we parted. It soon evolved she spoke a fluent English and we passed the time together pleasantly.

The striking young woman was on her way back home to a small town just outside Perugia, in which city she was employed as a bookkeeper. "It is a job, only a job to me," she volunteered, "nothing of interest. And my home life...that too is dull. So very dull! You see, my father died when I was a child, and last winter when my mother went too I moved to a rooming house...live there alone. I'll tell you, if I didn't get to Rome once in a while for a breath of life I couldn't bear it...all those empty days and weeks!" She shook her long dark hair from side to side in unhappy self-assessment and her bosom quivered sympathetically.

"Then why stay on?" I asked, moved by the intimacy of her speech and rarely lacking gratuitous advice. "You probably could get a job in Rome, you know—bookkeepers are always in demand in such a city. And if Rome is where you'd rather be, well, why not look around?"

"But such a giant step! To move oneself to Rome...." Beneath their heavy makeup her dark eyes clouded with the effort to assimilate the concept, begin to ponder it. How could it not have occurred to her before?

"But you don't have to uproot and move until you've found the right job...and then what have you lost?" I persisted. "Be looking around in Rome meanwhile."

She was giving the proposition real thought, I could see, even as we spoke of other things. Not my affair, how well I knew. Only let her realize she has free will, can take her life in hand (it's all her own), make her decisions. Only let her not wake up resigned some two decades hence, that fabulous bosom no longer heaving bravely in anticipation, sighing for the Roman opportunity she let pass by, murmuring unresisting as she sights the fifty year mark, "Ay, perduto adesso!" or whatever it is Italians sigh in place of the Burgenlander's "Verfallen jetst," too late.

Between times in my counsel I would look out on the passing countryside. Perched on a hill, the unbelievable little village my companion said was Spello; Assisi on its hilltop when we reached it, rich with promise but I hadn't time for it this trip....Time only for a night and day to taste the tempting hill towns in Perugia.

Perugia, medieval beauty of a city under-layered by the staunch Etruscans. Of chunky stone—steep rising wandering lanes and twilit cobbled streets and rugged walls and rough-hewn arches. Of Perugino's sweet-eyed faces tender with the peace of the town. Peaceful, except for the evening's clamor like Spain's paseo on the main street underneath election banners flapping with a fervor caught up in every breeze; except for the delegation of colorful hippydom who lounge about the Fontana Maggiore much as they have taken over the Dutchman's Dam, Lord Nelson's Column and the other storied landmarks of the world.

Perugia in the rain—a church that's handy so I duck inside and have come upon the Festa di Sta. Rita: in the apse a statued nun, glowing tapers, sprays of roses lavished at her feet; concealed from view a choir pays homage, its sweetly solemn cadences muffled only lightly by the velvet drape. Women still shedding raindrops file into the vestibule bringing long-stemmed scarlet roses, attar of candle smoke and roses in the rain.

Perugia when I'm hungry, and I stumble on the cavern-like Mensa la Deliziosa where I feast on pasta fagioli and sautéed liver and with the side things and a quarter liter it still stays well below a dollar. I am surrounded by students, black and white and many shades between, buzzing away under bare white walls in a stimulating internationality of sound of which I catch a lot as French, but not very many here seem to speak English. The manager however does, as he comes to sit with me and stays an hour and, in time, for another seven cents worth of lire I may as well sample the other color and variety of wine.

Perugia, and I must leave unwillingly its artistic riches and its tranquil stones...and alas its vino, rosso and bianco both....Descend its rock-bound hill in a bus to the railroad station under a full yellow moon and a low-lying sky full of Italy's special stars.

Train time again, oh so many trains through the night to conquer the distance! (Be grateful you can make it at all in the wake of the strikes.) Listen to this: Perugia to Terontola to Florence to Pisa to Genoa to Marseilles, and the trains absolutely jammed to overflowing, the week's traffic backed up heavily. On the platform at Terontola as, with an eye out for villainous spiders and delirious dancers I await my connection, I am entrapped in the benign but ungiving web of a black widow with a bright glance and assertive manner. Though we cannot parley with each other, nary a whit, she manages to introduce me to various neighbors as together we pace the platform's length, then shoves me aboard in front of her into second class and secures us two little let-down stools to perch on side-by-side in the corridor. In Florence another long wait, but I fear to stray far afield or I'll be stranded when I wind up in the shadow of an appreciably recollected Il Duomo where it must be shimmering mightily tonight with the play of the moon on its iridescent green and rose and milky marble. Later I glance idly out my window just in time to glimpse the Leaning Tower glowing dimly unreal in the first wan streaks of daylight—so legendary! that when after a lifetime of unthinking reference (layer cakes or amateur bookcases or a hundred unfocused homely things) I finally catch a fleeting glimpse, it comes as in a misty dream, stylized and symbolic.

I arrive in Genoa exhausted, hurry about the vast and echoing early morning railroad station, up and down palatial stairways in uncertainty, seeking information on a train to Marseilles. One of the glamorous TEE expresses is about to depart and, while it is too late to provide me with a reservation, the man at the ticket counter advises, "Just get on and take a chance—with a Eurailpass you'll be all right."

I am not precisely all right, but I manage. Landing anew in what appears a vacant seat, at each new stop I am booted out by its rightful occupant and again must forage. Embarrassing. Tiring too. At San Remo, as I seem to be holding my own for a happily extended interval, a pomade-scented sheik slinks aboard and takes over the adjoining seat. Almost at once his pasty hypocritical face is buried in a newspaper and his beige silk shantung knee is sidling toward me unmistakably. While ordinarily I lack the courage for anything but edging my way out gingerly to seek another berth—what if I am after all mistaken?—here the berths are at a premium. I give him one last benefit of the doubt and move in toward the window. Still anonymous behind his paper (lord, this is the worst kind!) he not only pursues me with a foxy leg but his arm starts cozying up at breast level—whereupon I act decisively with heel and elbow to defend my seat and honor. Fortunately, he takes his natty presence off at Ventimiglia.

And it is just then we leave the Italian Riviera for the French. Still mounting and dipping, the train continues to caress the coastline's siren curves. The fishing ports that dot the captivating landscape-seascape, the ancient villages that overhang it and even the wind-tossed play-boy sails on indigo waters all continue to enhance the scene's enchantment. Before ever I experienced the Riviera I was possessed of a kind of snobbery about it: too high society, a status thing...or yet too low, a-crawl with bargain tours...too popular, the deadly beaten path....Yet the rich are not necessarily stupid, nor the tourist agencies; and the artist, certainly, has a practiced eye for what is beautiful. This area is, let no one tell you not.

Three years before, centering too short a span of days in Nice, we drove up through the hills and gorges and fields heady with roses destined for perfume...to Vence with its Matisse Chapel and St. Paul-de-Vence, perched like ageless eagles on their splendid sunny heights...to Vallauris, from earlier than Roman times a potters' town, where Picasso put his endless creativity to work in the receptive clay.

Now too the going is so pleasurable that I am rapt in every passing prospect and have forgotten my fatigue.

It catches up with me in the afternoon however as, suddenly feeling wrung out and dreary, I descend to Marseilles. Descend weary down a sheer cascade of stairs from its railway station, seeking rest for my played-out bones in this restless old city. In my lifeless hand flutters the page detached from old trusty bargain hunter's manual with its raves about that spotlessly clean though tiny room in the charming though (frankly) modest hotel directly across from the depot.

But the necessary Boulevard Maurice Bourdet evades me, so I re-focus my bloodshot eyes, search the fine print and remark this time that one must exit the station from the right to discover the street. Reversing my frame of reference I tackle the job anew. By now a pair of fierce-looking mutts are tailing me, the fact that they are muzzled bringing little reassurance (a sign, on the contrary, they are suspected killers). A young girl sitting and sunning brown legs on a stoop has never heard of Maurice Bourdet but will run inside and query her older brother. Merci bien to you both. For nothing.

Ten minutes later I am still shuffling blearily about, still in the station's environs, in quest of the Bd. M. Bourdet and its tiny spotless room. One more try: the woman coming toward me down the street. She is reassuringly mature and the string bag of groceries she totes marks her as a local.

As I set down my suitcase to begin the overture, almost at once her hesitant smile at being halted turns to startled horror! Surely my few words of French can't have been all that detestable....When I follow her frozen gaze it traces down to the coat flung over my arm, where—Sacre Bleu!—a steady little fire is going, inching out from a glowing cigarette butt.

Exhaustion notwithstanding, I have certainly entered Marseilles in a blaze of glory.

Chapter Thirty-four: WITH SARAH AND THE GYPSIES

The look I turned on the vivid coloring of Marseilles was blank, uncomprehending. Eleven weeks on the road had left me saturated, unable to do justice to a new experience.

Impossible to ignore however, was the reputedly sinister aspect of the city when I nearly ended up a bonfire on its streets. The cigarette tossed, presumably, from an overhead window landed on an inside fold of the coat thrown over my arm and I managed to dump it before it did too much damage. At that point I gave up on Maurice Bourdet, tentatively explored a couple of darkly mysterious little caverns guarded by characters of an obvious villainy, then settled in at a large commercial hotel in the heart of the city that was reassuringly matter-of-fact and presided over by a charming lady clerk who spoke English.

The following day took place the long awaited event that had seized my fancy and grown there, coming as close as any to a "must" in my itinerary: the Gypsy Pilgrimage at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in the Camargue. There, goes the legend, landed a small company of Christians fleeing Palestine soon after Christ's death. Included were the three Marys: Salome, mother of the apostles James and John; Magdalene, the repentant courtesan; and Jacobe, sister of the Virgin. Also Martha, who would shortly be journeying to Tarascon to free its inhabitants from their dragon's reign of terror; Lazarus, risen from the dead, brother of Martha and Mary Magdalene; and Sarah, their Negro servant. At Les Saintes-Maries in its ancient church are said to be buried Mary Salome, Mary Jacobe and Sarah, the others having scattered through Provence to spread the gospel. Each year on May 24th and 25th an age-old festival brings gypsies flocking from all over Europe to do homage to their patron saint, the dusky Sarah.

An early morning train took me in under an hour to Arles, along a route that would soon become familiar. There, according to my helpful hotel clerk, I should be able to find a bus for the festival site. At Arles I made my way from the outlying railroad station along a scenic stretch of Rhone, past crumbling remnants of stone wall and to the centrally situated bus stop. The town lay hushed, a friendly lizard drowsing in the sunny golden atmosphere of Roman things and the medieval as I asked my way along its Sunday morning streets.

The bus stop too was drowsing—in actuality more café than depot—providing little of the positive information I required. Twenty minutes later I was still pacing the dusty clearing outside its door, studying the posted destination on an occasional bus, plaguing the occasional driver, when I was approached by a tall young man in blue slipover sweater who spoke to me in French. I caught Les Saintes-Maries and for some reason no longer apparent to me answered him in German.

"Oh, you must speak English!" he knew at once. He was a German student and the lanky attractive chestnut-haired girl friend at his side, French. In short we had agreed that to continue thus to await the phantom bus was hopeless, a waste of the morning; his proposal that we split the taxi fare, while on the expensive side, seemed sound—provided we could gather in another couple. After a half hour's search, we emerged with three new partners—even better—a mother, father and teen-age daughter, and with a willing taxi driver.

Arles lies at the apex of the delta formed by the branching of the Rhone. South of it fans out in an exotic desolation the Camargue, vast plain and marshland giving sanctuary to wildlife, pasture to fighting bulls and tamed and untamed horses and increasingly, acreage to the cultivation of rice. Such an area, as you would expect, has fostered an appealing kind of folklore centered on its lonesome cowboys, the guardians.

The road we drive along leads straight through seeming wasteland. Marsh rushes whisper in a sibilant breeze that cuts the mounting heat and countless pools give back a brilliant sky and tumbled clouds. A strange long- legged snowy bird takes off from the viscous swamp; a flamingo soars, a rosy streak. Well back from the road sits here and there a white-washed hut and in the misty distance can be seen a cluster that is probably a

farm. We overtake a pick-up truck that's hauling half-a-dozen celebrating youngsters; traffic seems light at the hour it has become.

The German student and his girl friend have crowded into the front seat with the driver, while the rest of us huddle together to share the back. Settled on her father's narrow lap is the long-legged daughter; she wears a wholesome bloom that illuminates both face and body and I am still wondering how so slight a pair begot this monumental child, when he peers with gentle eyes around her generous proportions to ask me can I not speak French, for we have had to rely on the German youth, with his mastery of languages, to keep a desultory conversation going.

"Non, Monsieur," I respond, "seulement Anglaise et un peu Español," measuring off between thumb and forefinger a none too modest quarter inch.

"Español!" Well that's another story. Turns out they are not French at all, though living here—they actually are Spaniards. Whereupon the driver, beaming, cranes his shaggy head about—and he is Spanish also. Scratch a southern Frenchman—how often I would find—and a Spaniard starts to bleed. Our ride takes on another language and an increased intimacy.

Then soon it is Farewell mis amigos, mes amis! and here is this nondescript little town that proliferates knicky-knacky shops and hides itself away from beach and sea with an ugly concrete barrier.

But its streets are really jumping on this day with a colorful conglomerate of types, and my Instamatic, of course, is instantly on the ready.

Most urgent matters first however: and I am last in line before a flimsy outhouse, then once inside must attempt to restrict myself to the circumscribed limits of the hole in the floor. This part of France, I will discover, frequently provides only squatters.

And who stood in line with me? Many are gypsies, by their complexion —but is it traditional or modern dress? Now who can say what modern is today? A long flowered skirt and sandals, a barefoot child, an infant at the dusky breast, but on the whole not unconventional.

And where, as I walk the crowded town, are the gypsy caravans, the horse and hooded wagon and the tent? These nomads have their caravans, true, but they are motorized: well-kept house trailers, the newest of motor homes lining every street and lane. And, rather than huddle about a campfire to take their meals, these gypsies opt for folding chairs and tables set up curbside and shaded by gay sun umbrellas—altogether prosperous looking and children of this age.

Where the hippies are, on the spread of turf they've taken over, there reigns the flamboyance—imaginative headgear and Indian band on flowing tresses...the tattered vest, patched dungarees...beads, a dangling earring and the ornamental lavaliere. An outer rim of respectably clad gypsy boys stand inhibited about the sprawled and cross-legged international hippy coterie. At the center, two lads of nineteen or twenty, sweaty and gleaming naked to the waist, are flailing arms about in exuberant abandon and jiving with their feet to a squalling guitar. "Ca-ca-huete!" all at once explodes the shorter, a sandy blond, grinning toward his audience and speeding up gyrations. "Nutsy baby, nutsy!" bellows back the taller, making cymbals of his hands.

Then my camera moves on and comes upon and shoots a professional team who are shooting the milling yokels from a tripod for a newsreel, for this is a widely heralded event.

And moves again to snap away in delight where in a roofed pavilion a spontaneous flamenco happening is underway. A woman with olive skin and bright black eyes relinquishes her diapered baby to an older child and mounts the picnic table; a guitar thrums and a male voice wails and her feet flash and her arms are striking out to posture in a studied arabesque. When she has done her thing she reclaims the infant and another woman moves on center, and this one is heavy-set and getting old, but her eyes are sexy and she moves her bulk about in dignity and grace. I stand on the sidelines captivated for ever so long, clapping away in an appreciative palmado with the rest.

The day is sweltering now and my thirst demands attention. I struggle through dense crowds that swamp the bars and douse the parch with that mixture of beer and lemonade, delightful and refreshing, weird though it sounds—to the British known as shandy and to the French as a panache. Along a midway reminiscent of a carnival are many tempting food stands where to make a selection is a sizeable challenge, which I accept as I satisfy my hunger.

But we have after all come on a pilgrimage to Sarah, other things apart.

Early afternoon I have a look at the church, a peculiar structure more fortress than otherwise, dating from the twelfth century. It certainly appears impregnable in its solid brick. Inside still stands the well which served the town's defenders in the event of siege.

The nave is crowded, takes struggling through, and I descend in short to the twilit crypt where rests the dark-visaged image of the gypsies' Sarah. She isn't really resting now however. She is being smothered in petticoats and gowns and cloaks in multitudinous assortment, being readied by her devoted attendants for her ceremonial outing. I never get close enough for real acquaintance with the lady, for surrounding those who putter busily about their idol adding on a bejeweled strand here, a silken trim there, are the crowd of gawkers who got here earlier than I. The air is heavy with the smoke of how many thousand candles being offered up and flickering and sputtering in the closeness and shortly I am confronted with the simple choice of staying on or breathing.

Later in the day the crowds assemble for the ceremony. They jam the fortress church, its roof and the square it fronts on, where I am stationed, hemmed in by a medley of eager folk. I maneuver about to free myself so as to stand apart for better vantage. Snap! where a crowd of French sailor boys, impossibly shiny-faced and innocent, form an exclamation point of color in the picture with their little-boy sailor collars of white-piped blue, their spanking white berets set flat on top their heads with those distinctive scarlet pompoms.

Through the speaker comes an endless panegyric, of which I catch repeatedly only the names of the saints monotonously intoned: Sa-rah...Mah-rie Sa-lo-meh ...Mah-rie Ja-coh-beh....I circulate along the edges of the crowd, impatient, eager for action.

And it begins—with the arrival of Les Arlesiennes. Marching toward the church and crowd, dignified and proud and lovely—the women of Arles. Tiny starched peaked cap that rides the piled-up coif, huge shawl collar filmy white in organdy or lace with a piece set into the vee for the sake of modesty, crucifix dangling delicately at the throat. Regardless of shape, size or years— displayed in fine variety—the women march straight and tall. Here is no hi-jinks masquerade, but a noble assemblage: heads high, feet stepping with a lively grace....Tradition. (In July the town celebrates the "Festo Verginenco," I am later told by my desk clerk, fete of the guardians and the Arlesiennes to honor the young girls who don the costume for the first time—presumably as virgins.)

Another interval with nothing but the interminable drone that's coming through the amplifier...the audience increasingly restless, shuffling their feet...the heat in full afternoon sun becoming fast oppressive. At the entrance to the church the crowd is being parted, preliminary to the eventual debut of Sarah in the streets. But it is too eventual for me. I wander off to discover, if I can, the route that will be taken as Sarah is marched off through the town. That way I can have a box seat for the spectacle.

Soon from the outskirts there advances toward the church a parade of mounted guardians and I follow after. Things begin to move in earnest. The droning from inside the church has halted and over near its entrance activity intensifies. I fly again to my scientifically calculated vantage ground. I am not alone however, must keep advancing to stay curbside; in addition, I wish to watch them come head-on and snap a little.

The guardians constitute the vanguard, leading the way on noble steeds of snowy white. Many are older men and all ride solemn and majestic. What a splash these cowboys make! They wear wide-brimmed Western hats and sit their saddles of gleaming honey-colored leather in princely form; here and there a flash of crimson shirt or white felt Stetson enlivens the somber dignity of the otherwise black attire.

But as I watch them coming toward me—horrors!—it is a far different splash being made by the men of the Camargue as first one, then another of their splendid steeds lifts up a showy tail to let go a stream of steaming turds. And the women of Arles who follow after in their proud black gowns that scrape the ground, how can they escape? The crowds have jammed the curbs, making impossible an orderly exodus from the narrow road now profusely despoiled in the horses' wake. And the gypsy entourage bearing their tenderly decorated patron Sarah...they have proceeded unawares to this point...what of the gypsies, what of Sarah?

Shambles! The procession breaks up in a thousand pieces—a mad scramble to circumnavigate the unholy mess....

Chapter Thirty-five: SANGRIA AND CHAMPAGNE

I woke on the Costa Brava at two o'clock of the morning following the day I turned fifty to find I had slept through dinner in a six-hour nap.

What was I doing in Spain again, you ask? For had I not just shipped home my Spanish dictionary, closed the book on Spain?...Life's little circumstances had conspired to deliver me up for a scant week to the sea swept beauty of Calella de Palafrugell, to the calm that again, as in Vienna, my bones and psyche both demanded. The Gypsy Pilgrimage had left me limp, the long day's hectic happenings capped off by an interminable bus ride back to Arles through which I had teetered on complaining feet among a press of bodies, and in addition a two-hour wait for the train in Arles, which time I had felt obliged to spend in further exploration. It was well past midnight when I reached Marseilles and fell gratefully into bed.

The last thing I wanted on the following day was another siege of festival. I couldn't care less if Sarah ever made it to the sea!

And the time was wrong for the hustle of Marseilles; my exhaustion said so, and those two spoiled brats, my feet, whose blistered heels demanded a moratorium on concerted tramping. My first thought had been a restful spot along the nearby coast of France, but investigation showed I never could afford it. Only careful husbanding of my diminishing funds would bring me solvent over the two-and-a-half-week span before Mike would come flying with fresh resources. (I absolutely would not jump the gun and wire for an advance.) Even the least fashionable French Mediterranean town was out of the picture, but Spain I could manage—Spain would, in fact, help average out Marseilles. And that way, should I feel inclined, I could spend Corpus Christi Day in Sitges as once envisioned.

I stepped off the Catalan Talgo at Gerona in a drenching rain and after a desultory search wound up in a flea-bag of a small hotel where to climb the ill-lit stairs seemed safer than to risk the terrifying creak and rattle of the ancient elevator. Later, as I readied myself for the unbleached muslin sheets and fought the disinfectant sweetness in the air for breath, I had the creepy feeling I was being spied on through stained cardboard walls by some demented Hitchcock character with a prematurely bloody dagger. At ninety pesetas I had overpaid badly.

I woke in that miserable room the following morning having undergone complete metamorphosis—to find myself fifty. And you know I josh....I was fifty all right, but so what? I had come push to shove with fifty and it didn't hurt! Different only on this day were the redeeming sun of Spain and the fact that, having crossed the Pyrenees, I could speak a little of the language. (Had the night before, in fact, picked up a pocket dictionary the image of the old at a little notions store where the soft-spoken woman had graciously directed me to a nearby square with a delightful restaurant that served good Catalan food and wine.)

Through Gerona's streets I found my way in the shining morning to the heart of town, where a river reflected the beige stone of the houses overhanging it and the flowers vining brilliant from their terraces. Somewhere nearby, I was certain, must exist a Turismo, for Gerona is the urban center for the tourist-inundated Costa Brava. At the approach to a bridge stood four middle-aged well-dressed men in earnest conversation, hands clasped behind their backs. Apparently they had all the time in the world, and when I asked directions, one of them undertook to lead me there.

The attractive young woman at the desk spoke English and was obliging, though my request appeared to strike her as unusual: I had dumped my problem completely in her lap. When we had eliminated first the expensive, then the noisy, resort towns, after a moment's hesitation she set forth her personal preference for her own weekends. And suggested her favorite hotel. And phoned for a reservation. And directed me to the bus that

would leave toward there at noon. She was a lovely girl and patient beyond the call of duty—especially since the sideways glances of a couple of male clerks at an adjoining counter made me out a pest.

The choice was perfect, Calella de Palafrugell still a quiet white cluster about three sand-rimmed little coves of transparent blue-green waters dotted by rocky prominences even I can clamber up to sun on. Many of the rowboats shored on its beaches of fine sand are undoubtedly still used for fishing, but the town is primarily resort. And before much longer, I am certain, its more peaceful aspects will have vanished. Though nothing now rises more than four stories, the condominiums are sure to come, more's the pity.

But the peace is still there, and soon after checking into the tasteful, comfortable hotel with its gracious management and gratifying rates, I have taken to the sands and dabbled sore feet in icy waters....Later, mounted to a geranium-fringed terrace overhanging the farthest beach and ordered sangria with which to toast myself on having turned so neatly fifty.

At a neighboring table two little boys are sipping lemonade with their mother and, listening in, I know them at once to be English. They are at loose ends and I am the only diversion about, so my Hi! brings them running in smiles. Dicky is eight and Arthur six and their mother is friendly and permissive, so that in time the young chaps have been of real assist in polishing off the fruity contents of the celebrant sangria pitcher.

I trust they slept as well as I did—the strong red wine having obviously been well laced with brandy as well as fruit juice—but, let's hope, perhaps they managed first to get their dinner.

# # #

Before leaving Marseilles I had dropped in at a local five-and-ten and summarized my wardrobe to the extent of two sleeveless blouses of printed jersey, at a total outlay of sixteen francs. But I would splurge yet a little more in deference to resort life. This morning I hie myself the several kilometers inland along the highway to Palafrugell in euphoric mood, the sun glittering, the meadows blooming hazily with orange poppies as though Monet had been at work along the roadside. I acquire an inexpensive short beach garment of turquoise cotton velour to cover up the bathing suit I've brought from home, and a pair of matching rope-soled canvas alpargatas, mercifully soft and generously proportioned. The bus I had thought to ride home will not depart for hours, so after a walk about and cold drink at an outdoor table that overlooks a buzzing little produce market, I decide to invest a dollar in a taxi. Several are parked at the curb opposite the bus depot and at one a hunched figure, presumably the driver, is involved with the motor beneath a raised hood. When the cabby straightens up, it is a shock to find he is a woman...one of the half-dozen so occupied in Spain, she tells me as we ride. She wears pants and her hair cut mannishly, is sturdy, briskly but pleasantly spoken and altogether charming.

The festivities at Sitges have been blithely by-passed, the tranquility too heaven-sent to meddle with. Upon arriving at Calella I had phoned Andrea in Barcelona and she had readily agreed to come and spend the weekend here with me instead. The days before slip away in splendid relaxation: Hours spent turning red then brown on sands and sea-slapped rocks. Long walks where the coastline turns to cliff backed up by massive pines. Heart-chugging ledges where I cling to smooth stone wall as I creep about the bend a scary hundred feet and more above churning waters and then am proud I made it undeterred. A path winds down to culminate in a beachside goblet of champagne for ten pesetas in a crowded nearby town.One day while out walking, clothed informally in my new beach garb, I decide to mount to Cap Roig and explore the botanical gardens attached to the castle seen poised against the blue of the sky from down below: a strange-looking little castle dating back only to 1926, but reconstructed of stones sufficiently ancient to be respectable. The strapping blond Swedish girl who tours us (me, a British and a German couple I find already there) tells us the owner is an eighty-year-old White Russian eccentric married to an English woman; they live in another building on the grounds, reserving the little castle as quarters for invited guests. In tracking down still others of the hundreds of varieties of acacia (or maybe its mimosa) that the gardens boast, we pass through a rustic gate as close as we will come to the castle itself. There, I note across a stretch of smooth green lawn while lingering behind the others for a closer look, a drape has been pulled aside at a leaded window pane. A man's face is peering out at me, undoubtedly annoyed at this intrusion—and at the very moment I have been tugging away self-consciously at the wickedly plunging neckline of my abbreviated outfit.

"Who is in residence today?" I ask the Swedish girl once I have caught up among the acacias (or mimosas).

"Oh, a very famous Spanish personage!"

"A writer?"

"No..." she replies, somewhat reluctant but unable to avoid the adroit pumping. "The well-known dress designer, Balenciaga."

And me in my 225 peseta baggy plunging neckline! But I am generous

—will not begrudge an artist inspiration.

Back home I am a couple of months later lounging about a friend's pool when she remarks that surely I have on my turquoise beach dress slightly backward—and proves it to me by the positioning of the bosom darts, which serve no earthly purpose on my back. No wonder the garment was plunging wildly at the neckline all the while!

# # #

Before long, Saturday is at hand and it is lovely to have a companion—

Andrea in particular—to share the sun and sand and ramble with in new directions down rapidly descending rocky paths to tiny coves and pebble -bottomed pools of captive waters. She has come by car, and we are off on drives both days through the magnificent reaches lying to the north.

To where a lighthouse juts with privileged coastal views atop the Cabo San Sebastian; and on to Aiguablava, where those who can afford the tariff and enjoy the rather chilly ambiente of the veddy swank hotel look down onto an awesome grandeur and rugged beauty.

To Ampurias on the sweeping Golfo de Rosas—to delve the ruins of what was once the prestigious center of the Greeks and then the Romans, for centuries "the last city of the civilized world, the final outpost of culture" bringing alphabet and coinage to the West and later bringing, too, Caesar's conquest to the Iberian peninsula—perhaps an altogether mixed-up blessing. We clatter over great Cyclopean blocks of stone and into rubbled ditches; stumble together up against unstatued pedestals and into gaping excavations; trail through a dead agora that sees no more the leisurely paseo, a silent stoa echoing no longer to the dicker of the housewife and the vendor.

I ordered with Saturday's dinner a fairly good champagne, for Andrea must help me, even though belatedly, commemorate (again) my birthday. We had finished off the bottle with the excellent food and were continuing our little celebration with the table wine, when Andrea remarked that she would rise the following morning for early mass at the local church and I was reminded of a previous conversation.

"You told me that day in Sitges, Andrea," I said to her, "that your priest will often lead the congregation in Negro spirituals. To me that seems unusual for Spain...is it a fairly widespread thing?"

"In Catalonia, sí. There is a 'new breed'—is that how you say it?—among our young priests, especially in Barcelona. They are close to the people, and for that very reason several, in fact, are now in prison." With the last words, Andrea, till now so relaxed, began to turn tense. Her brow creased a little above blue eyes turned dark and earnest and her fingers stiffened about the glass; you could see she cared a great deal.

"On what charges? Why were they imprisoned?" I asked.

"For nonsense reasons. One of them, for example, was accused of reading Mao's pronouncements from his pulpit. Perfectly ridiculous, of course...a bare-faced lie! Das ist nothing but another Franco lie to imprison another innocent man who dares to speak what El Caudillo does not wish to hear....Even our priests they throw in prison!

Later we walked through woods where the pungent scent of pine hugged close the night, we walked and talked. Emerged on a rise overlooking the blacked-out sands and sat on a low stone wall and listened to the night-time surf and talked some more. It came in torrents once she had begun and then discovered that we thought alike, the bitterness came pouring.

"Look what they've done to us at the University....The great man doesn't dare to let the students sit at lunch together for fear they will communicate. They've separated all the schools now, all the departments. Separate lunch rooms....For a literature student to talk to a science major over coffee is forbidden, even when at lunch time he happens to be closer to the science building. Keep each infection localized: a simple precaution. But we know, it is easy to see and we know why it is being done."

I asked how students at the University of Barcelona lined up politically. She herself, she said, and friends at school that she felt closest to, considered themselves to have a socialist orientation. Various political factions existed however, including anarchists and Maoists, and they were watchful generally of developments among French youth. "You must not think though, that every Barcelona student is political, for we have our playboys too, to whom the latest futbol score is all-important."

I was curious now to understand Andrea's family background anent Spain's Civil War. Here was a young woman so devoutly Catholic that when away from home she was driven to seek out her Sunday mass. What else went into her strange political makeup?

"My family? They were Nationalists. Fought for Franco. An uncle—my mother's oldest brother—had been an official in a small Catalan town and early in the war the anarchists dragged him out of the town hall and murdered him. I guess that determined which way the loyalty of my mother's family would go. And my father too; he himself fought with the Nationalists—to defend the Church. But his brother, my Tío Carlos—I think I mentioned him to you—Tío Carlos fought with the Republicans. Now when he comes to visit, my father and he still argue about those earlier times, but that is actually the only time the matter is discussed.

The topic, I discerned, left Andrea with a disturbing sense of ambiguity. But if the Civil War was ringed about for her with some confusion, perhaps it didn't matter much to her present posture. When the youth of Spain rally for their freedom, it must relate but little to the events and politics of thirty years ago: their necessity and their dream have been fashioned by their day-by-day experience.

Sunday night we dropped in at a cozy small café and sat sipping brandy while the waiter shared memories with us of the time he had met the American astronaut Armstrong. Over the radio playing in the background came Perfidia, then several other Latin American melodies familiar to me. When I mentioned the fact to Andrea she nodded and said, "Familiar to me too. I have been brought up with this music. These tunes are far more my 'cultural heritage' than the flamenco."

# # #

The following morning I left Calella de Palafrugell with Andrea for Barcelona, where I would entrain for Andorra, departing Spain this time by yet another route; and I was curious to see the tiny country.

Now we were southbound in the little tan SEAT along the Costa Brava, a route spectacular and precarious every snakingly precipitant kilometer of the way. But I placed full confidence in Andrea, who by this time, I now could calculate with accuracy, had after all a full eight months experience on the road.

We stopped in San Felíu de Guixols to check out the frantic tourist pace and then again in Tossa de Mar, together the resort giants of the coast. But while Tossa has its share of souvenir shops, above the crowded beach climbs a little village dating from the Middle Ages with impressive tower and graceful walls, so that if you will only cast your glance across the other reddening bodies you will at least know you are in Spain.

In Tossa I made a discovery of even greater interest, however. In the crowded vicinity of the esplanade along the sea stands a monument, dancing maidens sculpted in its stone, commemorating one Garreta—Andria said he was a noted composer of sardana music—and at the same time honoring Pau Casals. Now, the world's greatest cellist Pablo Casals (Pau in Catalan) had not set foot in his native land since Franco; an outspoken anti-fascist, he had been all those years, in fact, a leader in anti-Franco causes such as Spanish Refugee Aid. Yet here—planted firmly on Paseo Generalisimo—stands fast this monument, its homage to Pablo Casals flung in the teeth of the General.

Chapter Thirty-six: TO TRYST IN TOULOUSE

A sinking thud at the right hand rear of the bus said the wheel had dropped sharply off the road as we rounded another of the successive hairpin curves. And here off the road meant overhanging a void at the top of the Pyrenees. Well, for the last couple of days I had been bemoaning the lack of adventure, hadn't I?...sated with the exquisite but uneventful beauty of wooded slope, torrential stream and towering snow-clad backdrop. If Andorra's basic ambiance had turned out to be the reality of a long row of plasticky appliance shops grafted onto a fairy tale of a national absurdity, here was my golden opportunity to make this portion of the trip worthwhile—the last and greatest adventure of them all?

We were glancing hesitantly about at each other, the busload of us, with a kind of uneasy snicker, unsure of what attitude to assume or move to make. Should we be vacating this potential death trap, I wondered vaguely, or everyone be leaping to my side to balance out the dangling end? Instead, all occupants, including me, were beginning to mill about in a wholesale shifting of seats the better to view and possibly contribute to disaster.

During the general scramble, my eyes came abruptly up against the piercing blue ones of the man with the polished bald pate. I had been conscious of his gaze since boarding the bus at Les Escaldes, as repeatedly he raised his eyes from a sheaf of printed forms with which he was showily involved to seek me out across the aisle. The look was subtle rather than bold, and not knowing what else to do I had been ignoring it, annoyed but feigning ignorance as I kept pondering out my window why the snow should be so dirty that lay in drifts and hollows all about.

Now as I rose and stretched and rearranged myself along with the others, I had taken the opportunity to study the man; and he had caught me at it. In gray tweeds, white broadcloth shirt and neat striped tie, he was more formally attired than the rest of us—excepting, of course, the two French nuns seated forward in the bus. He was of slightly stocky build and at a guess in his middle forties. His nose was somewhat flattened halfway in its course, as though not by nature's design, and his gleaming head, which was absolutely hairless, was further distinguished by an undulant topography.

In time, having surveyed the situation carefully and smoked a cigarette, the driver gunned the engine and with a bit of earnest huff and puff got the vehicle rolling.

At the border outpost we piled out for a rest stop, last chance to avail ourselves of Andorra's tax-free bargains. I had earlier spoken a little with the friendly middle-aged Spanish couple seated just behind me and now, as we descended, consulted them regarding regulations on bringing spirits into France. Themselves unsure, they passed my question along to the bald one, with whom I had earlier remarked them in extended conversation. He was fluent enough in Spanish yet it did not seem his mother tongue; probably French, I supposed, from hearing him chat with the nuns. The couple relayed his response and, reassured, I entered the little shop and emerged with a bottle of Tío Pepe for the lady clerk at the Marseilles hotel who had repeatedly been so helpful. Pulling my coat about me, I strolled briefly along the chilly thoroughfare where we were parked, broad but desolate with its few sparsely scattered buildings and slapped flat onto the very top of the world where it overlooked a frosty horizon. We cleared customs with little ado and were soon deposited at a tiny primitive railroad station in the wilds of the French Pyrenees

Here I was confronted by a serious problem. I needed to know about connections for Marseilles—yet the railroad clerk and I could not communicate at all. I was making a bloody mess of it over at the ticket counter when the bald-headed man approached me to offer his services.

"Yes, I do need help, thank you very much!" I responded gratefully.

"If you will tell me your problem, I'll see what I can do." He spoke a perfect English, rendered charming, I had to admit to myself, by his accent.

"Well, I'm headed for Marseilles. I had hoped to find a train directly to Narbonne, where I could connect, but there doesn't seem to be one."

"I'm afraid not, he replied. What you must do is go first to Toulouse and change there for Narbonne; then again at Narbonne for Arles, where you can make your Marseilles connection. The train to Toulouse will not arrive for another hour, at best." He did some mental calculations then resumed his advice. "If you were to go right on, that would bring you to Marseilles somewhere in the middle of the night. You're hardly considering doing that, are you?"

Not the best of all possible arrangements, true, in light of the forbidding aspects of the city on my first arrival. I would have to mull it over, figure things out. Meanwhile I must at any rate board the train to Toulouse. When it arrived.

Until it did, the man settled down next to me on the wooden bench. He introduced himself as Jack Bourdon, a salesman traveling in some sort of plastics, and was shortly calling me 'arriet in his charming accent.

When at length came time to board the train, he continued after me into first class and as I entered a vacant compartment asked if he might join me there. I couldn't very well be boorish and refuse. Shortly, when the conductor made the rounds, it became evident that Jack had bought a second class ticket, but he paid the difference and stayed on.

"Tell me," he asked soon after the baggage was stowed away and we had settled in, "what is your origin, 'arriet?"

I thought of my primeval ancestors just emerging from the slimy bottom...or would some intermediate simian stage be satisfactory? My origin indeed! What kind of nutty conversation was he launching? Was he a religious buff of sorts?... but no, he hardly seemed the type. I stared at him nonplussed, trying to figure out a reasonable reply.

He saw my confusion, attributed it to language barrier. "What I mean is, what are you, your nationalité?... is that correct?"

"Oh, I thought you understood... I am American... from the U.S."

He was a little embarrassed, groping. "Yes, but in addition...what were your parents?... what is your background?

"Ah, I see," I said at last, thinking that was hardly his business. "I'm Jewish...is that what you mean?" My tone was defensive.

He beamed at me, suddenly not just suave but human, and leaning forward confidentially said," I thought you might be." Then he tapped his chest: "I too!"

How do you like that, Macey! They do say it takes one to know one. "Are you really! A French Jew?"

"No, I am not French; did you think I was? I spend much time in France, although my home is actually in Rome. But I was not born in Italy either. Our family comes from Egypt, lived there for generations...until Nasser. Then, when we had to leave, we settled in Italy....It was very hard." As he spoke of Nasser and leaving home a flicker of deep feeling lit his cold eyes, enhancing his humanity. Now, with a deeper look, I detected the olive cast to his complexion, lending credence to the story of his "origin."

"So," he continued, unctious once more, "you and I, 'arriet, we have a lot in common and should get to know each other....We are also both fetz."

Well, that did it! Some community of interest...and just when I was feeling so thin from all that tramping over Europe. I swung a conspicuously discouraging shoulder toward the window where, in a wild and pock-marked landscape, the mountains now had given way to stark white limestone cliffs and boulders.

But there was no escaping Jack's persistence. "You know, you must stay over in Toulouse; it is your only course of action. A little recreation and a good night's rest, then first thing in the morning you set out for Narbonne. I believe there's a train at eight, which I myself will probably be taking, for I continue on to Lyon." He pressed his case. "I know Toulouse well, can show you the town...a good dinner and a little wine, a pleasant

evening. We are so well suited to each other..." What, fat Jews? I thought. "It would be a tragic waste not to share a pleasant evening when we are both alone."

"Look, Jack," I finally felt constrained to say, "I may be alone right now, but as I have told you I am on my way very shortly to Copenhagen, where I will meet my husband, from whom I have been separated for close to three months. I want you to know I am deeply attached to him and, further, that having managed to survive without a man all this time, I can hang in there for another ten days."

"Ah, 'arriet! I thought you were not so provincial!" He raised his shoulders in disbelief, his eyebrows quizzical. "Of course I appreciate your feelings for your husband—but how does one situation affect the other? You are a free individual, are you not? And are you depriving him of any favors when anyway many thousands of kilometers lie between you?" His head wagged in disparagement as he continued the attack. "That is childish....You do not really look upon a pleasant interlude as sin, I can't believe that!"

"No, certainly not sin! And of course I am a free individual. I have an open attitude on such things...no moral or philosophic objections whatsoever. I am just saying that it isn't what I want. I don't care about for other people

...but for me." How could I tell the man that the very thought of un-sinning with him set my skin to crawling. And that I had had more attractive offers I had not accepted.

"You mean for you never, till the end of time? If you have no moral objections, how can you predict that?"

"How can I speak of forever? That I am not prepared to do. I mean for me right now!"

Macey, you dolt, why must you defend your position to him? This isn't a philosophic polemic you've been sucked into. Your friend here is an old hand at it, has a string of arguments up his sleeve all with one end in mind—yours. And don't let it go to your head, because his type will make the pitch to any old rag and bone and hank of hair...he's a bachelor and traveling salesman, how do you suppose he gets his kicks....So don't try to prove how free a soul you are, just change the subject!

So I did, but sooner or later, no matter where it started, the talk would always turn suggestive. At one point he showed great surprise at how little baggage I was traveling with—me, an American abroad and so, needless to say, a woman of substantial means.

"It is enough, I assured him. "I haven't felt the need for more. Life is far simpler this way. You know, staying in cheap little rooms and being involved with few possessions, I have experienced an entirely new freedom. It will be hard getting back to too many rooms filled with too many belongings, clothes in the closets and charge bills in the mail—who needs it!"

"Yes, but you talk that way because you've never been really poor and aren't now. Me, I do not underestimate the desirability of possessions, the importance of money. We left Egypt penniless and within a year my father was dead and I was the head of the family. Well, it wasn't easy getting a start. If I were still penniless, what would happen to my mother at her time of life with me out of town so much? Do you know how many lire it costs per month to keep her in an old age home?" and he named an astronomical figure. "It is my pleasure to be able to do this for her now."

Had I doubted his Jewish origin, this mother in an old age home surely would have proved his story.

He immediately offered another illustration of the importance of money to him, a long drawn-out yarn involving some beautiful young Frenchwoman he could have had (in bed) some years ago in Bordeaux but could not afford to take her to dinner first and so was ashamed and broke the date and fled, passion unrequited. Several years later when he ran into her in the Bois de Boulogne, his pockets jingling now, she could not go to dinner (or to bed) with him due to a thoughtless husband unreasonably awaiting her at home. "What a shame!" she had responded when he explained why he hadn't showed up that night. "I'd have been happy to pay for the dinner!"

"C'est la vie!" I murmured. Tough.

"Speaking of dinner," said Jack, "since you have wisely decided to stay over in Toulouse, let me just take you out to dinner tonight. Certainly there can be no wrong in that. I know a very good restaurant...you will enjoy the food...the typical cassoulet, whatever you like. And we will just be two friends sharing a pleasant evening's

talk over a bottle of wine. You cannot in honesty tell me that sitting down to a lonely table night after night is a pleasure! How well I myself know the feeling."

He was drawing a very persuasive picture now. It might indeed be pleasant to spend an evening in the Toulouse I liked so well with someone who knew the city, its language and food. But then I thought of the musician on the Transalpin Express—it just had to turn out unpleasant!

"Jack," I said, "you make it sound very tempting. But it seems that when a woman traveling alone is indebted to a man for so much as a glass of wine, he expects to personally stamp her Paid in full," and I told him my story.

"That is not necessarily so."

"Will you say to me in absolute sincerity that if I accept your dinner invitation that will be the end of it—you will expect no more than my company at dinner? You see, I'm being very frank."

"Me, I am always frank! Of course you will owe me nothing as a result of my having bought the dinner. But if afterward, aside from that, you wish to continue the relationship...again one situation has nothing to do with the other. It could be very pleasant."

The man was talking in circles—it would never work. And we were both talking this thing to death. "Listen, Jack, if truly all you want is company at dinner, why don't you ask the two French sisters?" He had promised the nuns, I knew, to meet them in the station when we landed at Toulouse and help them make connections: they were from some distant province and bewildered by the worldliness of such transactions and, for his part, Jack enjoyed the role of worldly-wise mentor.

"You are bad, 'arriet! You know that, don't you?" he chuckled, and it cleared the air and warmed his cold blue eyes and humanized him once again.

Oh what the hell! I really was being childish. I was a big girl now, well able to cope. And anyway, who ever heard of a Jewish lecher? "I'll tell you what," I proposed. "I will go with you to dinner only if I pay my own way—dutch treat. Doing that, I am not beholden to you; you are not taking me to dinner, we are just dining together. I have at any rate always preferred to pay my way—elbowed Mike (who's now my husband) out of the way so I could pay my own fare to the streetcar conductor the first time we went out together. But since I cannot afford a very fancy place, we must make it modest. What do you say?"

"All right," he agreed after a moment's hesitation, "if that's what you insist on. Just so you will come. However, I will buy the wine."

I thought briefly of knock-out drops in the drink, then shrugged it off as fantasy. We shook hands on the deal and shortly afterward the train pulled into Toulouse.

As we passed from platform to station, Jack suggested that I wait for him near the newspaper kiosk while he did his good deed with the sisters, whose flowing black robes stood out among the crowd still pouring through the doors.

"That would be a needless waste of time. I will leave you now and find a room; there are any number of hotels just across the way...I've been here before, you know. Since we are both hungry, I will clean up quickly and get right back here. Give me, say, forty-five minutes. Meet you here at the kiosk." I picked up my suitcase and turned to leave.

Jack's jaw dropped, literally fell open. Then he recovered sufficiently to respond excitedly: "I...I told you there's this fine hotel right here in the station, and it isn't terribly expensive....Wait, where are you going?"

"To find a room some place else. I'll be back, I promise."

"But...but why don't you stay here? It's because I'm putting up here, isn't it? You don't want a room in the same hotel...." How crestfallen he appeared—le pauvre!

"I guess that's right. If you still want dinner with me, be back in forty-five minutes. Ciao!" I gave him a little shove in the direction of the nuns and headed across the street toward the Boulevard Bonrepos. For a good night's rest was what I fully intended having, close on the heels of dinner.

Chapter Thirty-seven: THE LAST SHUFFLE

Dear Andy (I wrote my youngest),

Well, the end's in sight, the three months almost over. Now I am badly in need of flesh and blood companionship again, hungering for it, positively voracious! The other day I remarked to my young Spanish friend Andrea, who spent the weekend with me on the Costa Brava, that in anticipation of this solitary idyll's end I must rehearse sustaining talk with a companion. But I didn't need to worry, talk came flowing readily enough. In fact, poor Andrea! who bore the brunt of my loquaciousness.

Three days now I have been back in France. Here in Marseilles one is almost overwhelmed with atmosphere. Or I would be, were I not quite so inured from three months bombardment with impressions. Still, there is no escaping the ambience mysterieux that stalks its streets despite their boisterous ferment: Marius dispensing the prickly sea urchin portside, but also those olive-skinned men with needle-point eyes who should be vile white-slavers desirous of my aging flesh, yet are only thrusting some wildly- colored garment in my face from curbside stalls, desirous of my dwindling francs; at night the dark little streets adjacent to the Vieux Port, their sweets shops sticky with delicacies from North Africa and the Middle East; the babble and tumult and vigorous confusion of languages and garb in this crossroads metropolis that one senses belongs not alone to France but to the Mediterranean. I love to wander the market place feeling the industrious housewife as I buy up bits of cheese and sausage and a paper spindle of sweet cherries to lunch off in a nearby grassy square.

Just happening on Jean Jaurés Place brought a stab of delight when I detoured off La Canebiere one day; and I felt a vast excitement when, hiking toward l'Estaque to commemorate Cezanne along the outskirts of the newer harbor where the freighters and the ocean liners are, I came upon three arrows scrawled upon a wall. (Three arrows, you probably know, is the international socialist symbol hailing from Vienna and representing the political party, the trade union and the cooperative.)

I must tell you now what happened to me during my recent stopover in Toulouse. En route from Andorra I ran a-foul of this rather lecherous Egyptian Jew who persuaded me to dine with him. Parting at the Toulouse station, I promised to meet him back there in forty-five minutes. Now, despite the myriad hotels along the Boulevard Bonrepos, to find a room at my price was no cinch, and when finally I did I felt so grimy that a wash-up gave way to a detailed sponge bath, and I even washed my hair and had to towel it dry. When at length I high-tailed it back across the street to la gare I was a good hour overdue. There was votre mere all painted and perfumed and feeling very much the femme fatale....But where was Jack the Ripper? Nowhere in sight, though I waited five minutes or more. Had he come and given up and left, that easily discouraged? Or, doing a double-take, had he concluded my company ill worth his time if only for the dining? First I was crestfallen—though I myself had debated not showing, debated as I dawdled, drying with great deliberation between my toes. Then I was furious—for, were the date to be broken, that should have been my prerogative! Did Jack in fact show that night, and think I had used that prerogative? Or did he not, and use it himself? Who got left waiting at the kiosk? The Lady or the Tiger?...

# # #

Continuing on to Marseilles from Toulouse I stopped off at Arles to check the P.O. and found a wire from your thoughtful father saying Happy Birthday!—as well as a tactful note from your mathematical brother who had figured out a consoling statistic: "Just think, now you're only twice my age—a new low!"

Also In the mail was a letter from my friend Angie Pitman. She was wild with envy, eager to join me in another journey soon, says she wants to "vagabond it," go my style. Yet I happen to know that she, when later

she boasts about the hotel she stayed at, meal she enjoyed or objet d'arte she acquired, always raises the price to make it out de luxe. While I, when I tell about mine, always lower it to make it out a bigger bargain. I boast about eschewing lobster for sardines; she reacts by murmuring "poor dear" with evident compassion. Our equally virulent varieties of snobbery—can't she see?—would be clashing histrionic swords along an incompatible, tumultuous line of march.

My variety of snobbery I come by honestly from your grandpa:

Late one summer afternoon in the long ago, returning from his delivery route he burst into the kitchen, an enormous watermelon tucked beneath his arm. "Look, Min!" he shouted proudly, "Look at today's bargain!"

Your great aunts of the second and third floor happened to be looking on, passing the time of day over the teacups. When they had sampled the melon's dead-ripe sugar-

sweet red flesh, she of the third floor ventured, "Truly delicious, Nathan; and what did this fargenigen set you back—why such a bargain? I would guess you put out a good dollar for it, anyway...."

"What kind of a dollar!" rejoined your grandpa indignantly. "When Nathan says a bargain, a bargain it's got to be. What would you say if I told you...a quarter!"

"A quarter!" Herself no squanderer, still she had to be impressed. "All right—for a quarter you can bring me back one tomorrow."

Whereupon my good tante of the second floor joined in: "Well, if it's not too much trouble, Nathan, pick me up one too. A quarter, you are right, is a worthwhile bargain."

On the following day they gladly reimbursed him the fifty cents for his two dollar outlay.So you see, this practice can be carried to extremes..

# # #

Saturday late—Tonight, content with my boullabaise I sat at an outdoor café looking out on a restful early evening port where the strenuous day's activities had dwindled out—fish stands shut down, excursion boats to the Chateau d'If (Count of Monte Christo stuff, I had to go) now bobbing at anchor together with the fishing fleet and rich men's luxurious cabin cruisers.

Sat gazing across the harbor crammed with silenced boats to where the rather fancy Virgin topping off the Notre Dame basilica stood guard from her hilltop vantage, a purpling silhouette against the chiaroscuro of the sky. (Yet not as purple as this prose emerges!)

Yesterday in Aix en Provence it was a Cours Mirabeau table and I was sipping a vermouth on the jazzy side of the street where all the shops and restaurants and cafés sit impudently staring down the rank of old mansions settled across the handsome shady boulevard in heavy dignity, censorious matrons chaperoning from the sidelines at a swinging ball.

It was an ultra-modern electric double-deck glass-domed train brought me to Aix for the day, sailing smoothly through a countryside blocked out by Cezanne in his spectrum of greens. Before I left my hotel Madame Massenet, the desk clerk, who has really been a dear, advised me lightly, "Going to Aix today, are you, Madame Browne? Better be sure to wear your hard hat!" I didn't fully understand until days later I remarked in the Herald Trib they'd been having a bit of student unrest at the university there. You know Aix....What a great feel of cultural aliveness, of intellectual ferment! Despite its fountains overhung with moss, the statue of Good King Rene fondling his muscatel grapes, the spa resort aspects and the gracious, spacious avenues and squares. "Le pouvoir est dans la rue!" screamed a chalked-up graffiti where a bicycle leaned against the wall—the power is in the streets!—and I had to capture the scene. I still had the camera out when I came upon the little boulangerie whose window held a couple of dozen different sizes and shapes of bread, some with whimsical pretzel-twisted faces—so you'll get to see that too, but alas! you will not get to share in the scrumptious pain au chocolat.

# # #

Monday evening—And I am in Arles and settled down gratefully in this cozy hotel on the Rue Moliere in a room so reminiscent of Van Gogh's I was startled when I first walked in. Shutters and cane-seated chair and little wooden table, but in addition a comfortable double bed, a couple of braided rugs and a washstand. Down the hall and up a short flight of stairs is a tiny room that holds a toilet with a seat and a limited supply of slick

grayish paper—nothing more—and your mother may be heard to sigh contentedly on entering, "Ah, this is Paradise now...."

For everything is relative. Which brings me to my youth hostel experience.

Yesterday afternoon I stepped off the train from Marseilles and trailed through town directly to the hostel. I was now confronted with the ideal opportunity to use the pass you and Roz so generously provided and for which conditions up to now had never been quite right. I had noted the hostel's location on a previous stop in Arles, and the time of day seemed appropriate; furthermore, the economy, coming at this juncture, could not have been more welcome. Following the signs for the Auberge de Jeunesse to the rear of an enormous dusty clearing where a goodly part of Arles' male population must have been playing boules, I found myself at a simple structure not unlike a modest summer cottage. A young man with a shaggy beard who spoke a little English informed me the person in charge was attending the Kermesse, would not return till six. I left my bag inside the door as he suggested and wandered off. Along the nearby boulevard, a covey of scarlet balloons adrift in the sky led me to what appeared a PTA fair—the Kermesse that enlivened the neighborhood with its food stands, games of skill and loud-speakers blaring music and announcements. Underfoot darted little girls in traditional Arlesienne dress as their fathers aimed darts at a target or attempted to land a quoit precisely about the neck of a real-live duck cavorting in a pond. I was shortly approached by two fifty-ish women who asked me in a babble of French if I knew what time the chanteuse would be coming on. "Je ne le sais pas..." I murmured knowledgeably and smiled brilliantly as I hunched my shoulders. So much for your contention, Andy, that natives anywhere in Europe can spot the American in their midst! And this has happened to me often.

As I was relaxing at a table over a panache I was attracted to a poster announcing a bullfight in the old Roman Arena, due to start in ten minutes.

For all of five francs, I sat up as close as I wanted, then was able to move at will among the few hundred spectators, where once there had been twenty thousand. The basic ambiance was of a parodied event—the teen-aged bullfighters in simple white rather than suit of lights, Oles and paso doble canned, and a little old man in black beret advancing to sound his tinny bugle for the start. The bulls appeared more like cows, really, but it managed to get exciting as a lad was tumbled to the ground. When the young bull glowered over him and jabbed and gored I would spring from my old stone bench and yell, No, no, the bull is killing him, don't let it! but nobody paid me any mind and soon the boy would rise all rumpled and dusty but apparently intact. This was a corrida Provençal style, not to the death, and in the climax the matador went over the horns, which were surely blunted, to snatch a frilled dart (the coucardo?) from between 'em. The most skilled part seemed to be persuading the bull to leave the ring; once two belled creatures (sexy cows?) were sent in to act the judas goat and lure him out. This was obviously a minor event, but that impressive old arena, as well as the one at Nimes, is on the circuit of Spain's most highly touted matadors.

And now there is no escape: I must report to you at last about that most highly touted (by me, that is) youth hostel. Returning shortly after six, I opened the door and entered the central room, a large kitchen with stove and cupboards and long wooden table where several young people were involved with their dinner preparations. I tracked down the manager and despite my several silver hairs was admitted into residence, then asked for and was rented a bed sheet—but a strange variety. Somebody pointed me to a door and I entered the girls' dormitory. Here stood approximately thirty cots, mostly double-deck, of which I selected the closest one, a lower berth with what appeared the last decent unoccupied mattress. Now began the tussle with the sheet, a kind of long narrow sack which I assumed was in effect a mattress cover; but try as I would to fit it over the mattress—like a pillow case on a pillow—the task seemed impossible. I searched my memory for a clue: what had Roz said...sew me up a sheet? For the love of god! had she mentioned what to do with it? At a short distance three or four young maidens were lounging about on their cluster of cots, brushing out long blond tresses, filing finger nails, conversing spasmodically in some probably Scandinavian tongue. Across the room half a dozen others had disposed themselves in various stages of undress and postures of rest. Surely some among the total were conscious of my struggle, conspicuous as I made myself while acting the fool with that blasted contraption. Was it respect for my age that kept them from making a suggestion? Or indifference? And I was too proud to grovel for the information. Flinging the sheet flat upon the cot I climbed on top of it, drew a blanket over me and fell immediately into a deep dead sleep.

I woke to some unintelligible foreign oath to find a golden-haired ill-tempered virago standing over me and raging, Who's been sleeping in my bed! and gesturing vindictively toward the unassailable evidence, which earlier I had missed, of her towel flung over the ladder at the foot of the bed. The message wasn't hard to get—in any language. As I moved meekly to a lumpy cot just down the aisle and settled there with my paraphernalia it suddenly dawned...and I slipped myself, and not the mattress, into the sewn-up sheet quite neatly and fell briefly back asleep.

Afterward, having discovered the cold shower and few washstands in the communal "bathroom," in addition to the better mattress I also envied Goldilocks her towel. With the help of my tissues, I was able to wash my hands and cream my face clean, and they were useful also in the one and only squatter that must serve us all. By now I had achieved a measure of expertise in pissing rather accurately down the hole, but I knew that sooner or later in my Arlesian stay I would have to carry matters just a little further—and one of my young neighbors in precisely that predicament had recently missed and left the evidence.

I was dousing myself lavishly with underarm deodorant when one of the Scandinavian girls joined me in the bathroom. "She didn't have to do that....We all thought that was mean!" she said in English, and I felt much better for this show of humanity as I exited to hunt up a hotel for the following day.

Lest I seem ungrateful, Andy, let me explain that I must spend tomorrow night entrained—off to Copenhagen—so I would just have to have a good night's rest, a decent wash and, not the least, a conventional toilet.

Before returning to the youth hostel, I dined hugely in the restaurant of the hotel arranged for the following day: an elaborate hors-d'oeuvres assortment, boeuf a la gardian, ratatouille and a half bottle of a potent rouge. Oh those French chefs!

As for today, most of it I spent in an unguided bus tour through the surrounding region. To Montmajour Abbey, as it happened just the previous day the scene of the Royalist Rassemblement for which I had with interest noticed posters slapped up through the towns of southern France—now here were the slogans still chalked on the pavement. (So there are still French royalists, mon dieu! how hard they die.) In the shadowy crypt I struck up conversation with a wry-humored Englishman whose silvery head was buried in his Michelin, seventyish, tall and willowy and walking aided by a cane yet undaunted in his enthusiastic touring. Next, Daudet's windmill of the thirty-two winds of Provence (several of which I believe I've sampled) where he penned his famous letters. Then St. Remy and Les Antiques, the excavated ruins of Roman Glanum. Nearby, the ancient monastery of St. Paul, now a nursing home, once an asylum for the mad, Vincent Van Gogh its most renowned madman.

Above all, Les Baux, Court of Love of the troubadours of old, one of whom got his heart served up, bien cuit, to his lady love for dinner when her husband the knight returned from a hard day's joust to know himself a cuckold. (More prosaically, the home of bauxite.)

I clambered up through crumbling blocks of stone and treacherous rubble to the shattered white desolate heights of its Citadel, the battlements blasted by some Louis' demolition squads to hold his rebellious fief in check. Looked dizzyingly down from that awesome eyrie where unfortunate captives once were made to jump into the Val d'Enfer beneath; here Dante, they say, modeled his Inferno. Down to where Les Alpilles, the massive little Alps, rise all about that hellish valley's forbidding limestone crags and orifices. Descended again to the stark and ruined ghost town, stone streets lined with gaping facades until they lead you back to the ever-present gift shop and a sprinkling of restaurants. But some day when my money's not so tight I'd like at least to dine at the famed Hotel La Beaumaniere, which carves an oasis of green out of a facing mountain. The clouds that had been threatening burst as I found my way to where the bus was parked.

Tomorrow I'll wander through Nimes, a short ride away by rail. Then in the evening re-train to travel north, leave Arles after too short a sojourn, depart her dreamy little streets that tranquilize the soul, in contrast to Marseilles' that shake it up. But not all that dreamy, in reality—where, from the core of her antiquities the twentieth century suddenly leaps to startle. Plastered up against the Roman ramparts the simple modern slab: three life-sized figures, one supports a falling comrade, at their feet a third lies dead; to the dead of the Resistance, reads the plaque, l940-45...to victims of the Nazi concentration camps...to the Maquis who fought for liberation. Inside Arles' town hall that dates from Mansard and the sixteen hundreds, proud bust of her classic daughter, dove's wing in flight on a piled-up coif...above, a verse by Mistral: Arles! O, tu qué sies

estado...beneath, a chilling dedication: To mayor and city councilman of Arles, died l945... deported to Germany (Jews?)...mort pour la France....

# # #

Friday evening—I've got to kill this off somehow, Andy. Yet there's still much I could be telling you. Perhaps I will, just a little, calm my jitters, anesthetize my nerves. Mike tomorrow morning! As it is, I'll never be able to sleep tonight.

The train through Northern Germany, scene positively pastoral. Patchwork of greens and the rich red-brown of fresh-tilled earth, you can virtually smell the manures that nourish it. Half-timbered villages clustered about their church spires. Half-past eight, suddenly a pond to reflect red roofs in that last great valedictory of sunlight, suddenly my seat suffused with the glow of sunlit rooftops—oh, if only I could paint—or like Isadora dance, and dance the red roofs into ecstasy! Sun sets still an hour afterward, sky stays rosy, long time brushed with light. We are after all speeding northward toward the Midnight Sun.

At eleven the train pulls into Lübeck, will linger for an hour. At midnight my Eurailpass expires—but in any event it will. I cease debating, choose the less practical alternative; grab my bag and descend to deserted streets to hunt up a hotel, determined to see a little of this Hanseatic city, later in broad daylight ride through the poetic countryside and cross the waters into Denmark, why lose these to the blindness of the night! Next morning early, I head through the Holstentor, Lübeck's main gate, toward the town's center. Its twin towers stand proudly as the city's symbol, but the arch between them sags so crazily after five hundred years of competing with gravity that only reluctantly do I duck beneath. Buddenbrookhaus, says a placard further along, where Thomas Mann was born...quick surge of the familiar. Then I locate at the side of a canal the block of gabled warehouses remaining from the days when Lübeck was the Hanseatic League's commercial capital. Another small stretch with medieval vestiges, an old town hall and a couple of lovely churches, but most of the city seems spanking new and I am surprised and a little disappointed. However, the Marienkirche, a mixture of very old and quite new, is a beauty, so I spend a little time inside.

Remember, Andy, my constant carp about how anachronistic Last Suppers usually are, in that they've set the table with the yeasty rolls or loaves of the artist's homeland, whereas I maintain they ought in all authenticity portray unleavened matzos?—well, here in Lübeck the main course is a whole roast pig! The death mystique crops up in skulls and skeletons distributed among the older decorations. And death more recent in the chapel, where two bells have been left to remain where they dented the floor when they fell and smashed in an air raid, the Gedenk-Kapelle dedicated to the war dead: a memorial against war and violence, Krieg und Gewalt.

In the train shortly afterward I learned from the young couple sharing my compartment that Lübeck had been virtually flattened by bombs and rebuilt, which explains the paucity of old town atmosphere. The young woman was Swedish and he a Dane and both seemed startled as I tried those first few words of German on them but immediately grasped the truth, and of course both spoke English beautifully.

When I asked how many languages they spoke the man said five or six, then turned to his companion: "Tell her how many you speak, Gerda," he suggested, smiling.

"Modern languages? Let's see..." and she toted up ten, including Icelandic and Faroe Islandese.

Then they took pity and burst out laughing, confessing she held a doctorate in languages, hardly the average Scandinavian. Yet I was sufficiently impressed with the young man's bare half dozen. What a dolt this American felt herself!

Comes the train ferry between Puttgarden, Germany and Rødby Faerge, Denmark. I settle on the upper deck in the salty sun, watching the seagulls that maintain a faithful escort swoop and dive for the leavings of the ferry's lunchroom. The Danish countryside that follows is flat, sparsely settled with farms, many of its houses roofed in corrugated tin and thatch.

I arrive in expensive Copenhagen with two days to go and six dollars worth of kroner in my pocket—counting everything, no more pesetas or francs stashed away in comforting corners—having paid out a devastating cash fare of over ten dollars when my pass expired.

Am running up a hotel bill to be settled by your father (to that extent I shall allow myself to cheat) and have been living off sausages and smorresbrod featuring lox, shrimp, herring and all such lovely things, from the corner cart, certainly no hardship. Admission to the Tivoli both nights was a relatively large item—but how

resist Fairyland!—and then I had to drop a (very)few coins in its one-armed bandits. But I am managing well—so much so that after bus fare to the airport I should be left with almost four kroner, or sixty cents American.

It's one A.M. Tomorrow at nine I meet Mike's plane. Till then I shall just have to survive the night alone with my excitement. After that time, if you do not hear from me again so soon you will know it's that I'm busy catching up....On news, that is, from home.

That's it now. I have written myself out, as I knew I must when, looking back on Lisbon and my first fifty years, I stood at the rail one day on a Portuguese ferry.

As ever,
Mamita tuya