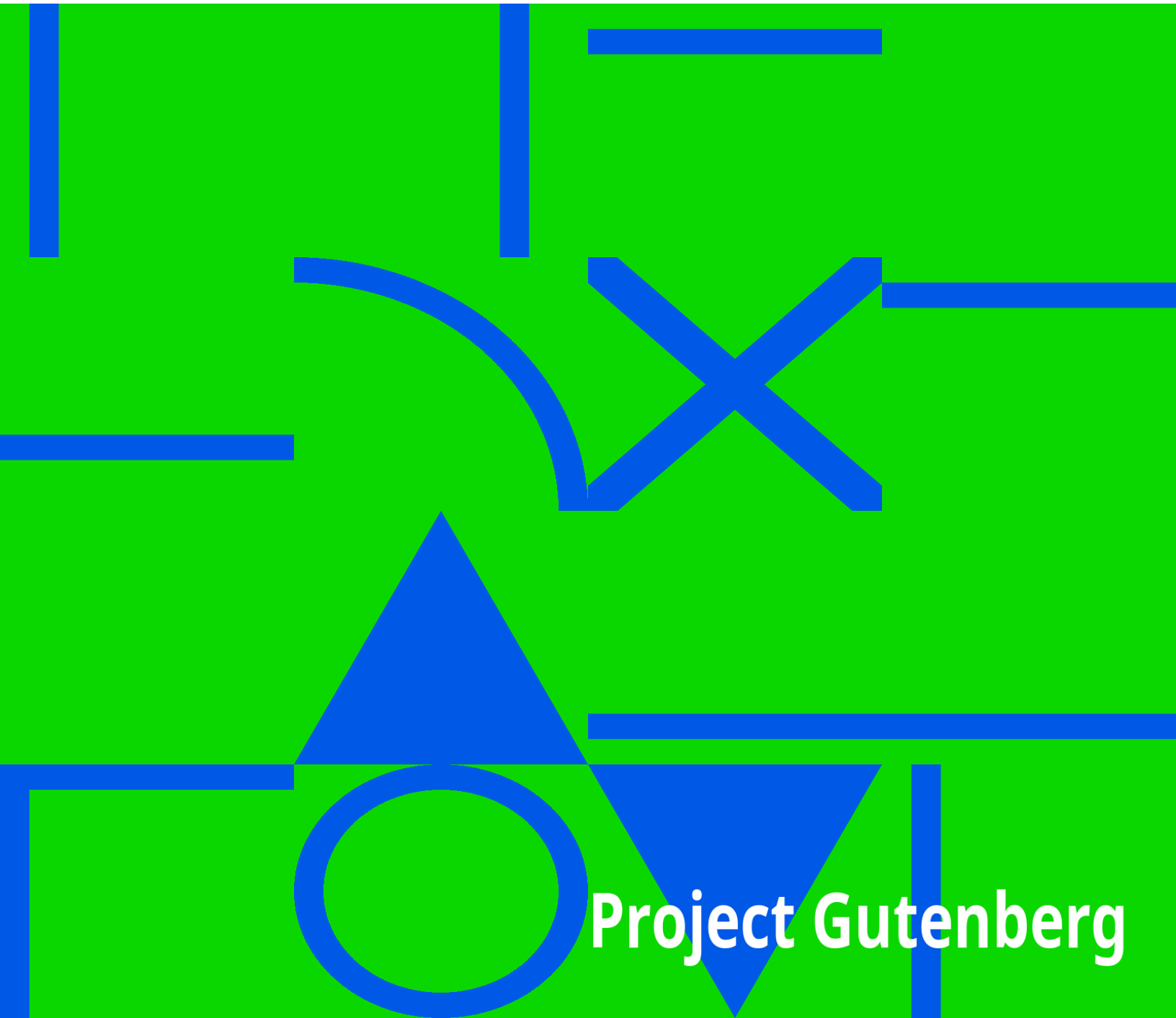
The Five Arrows

Allan Chase



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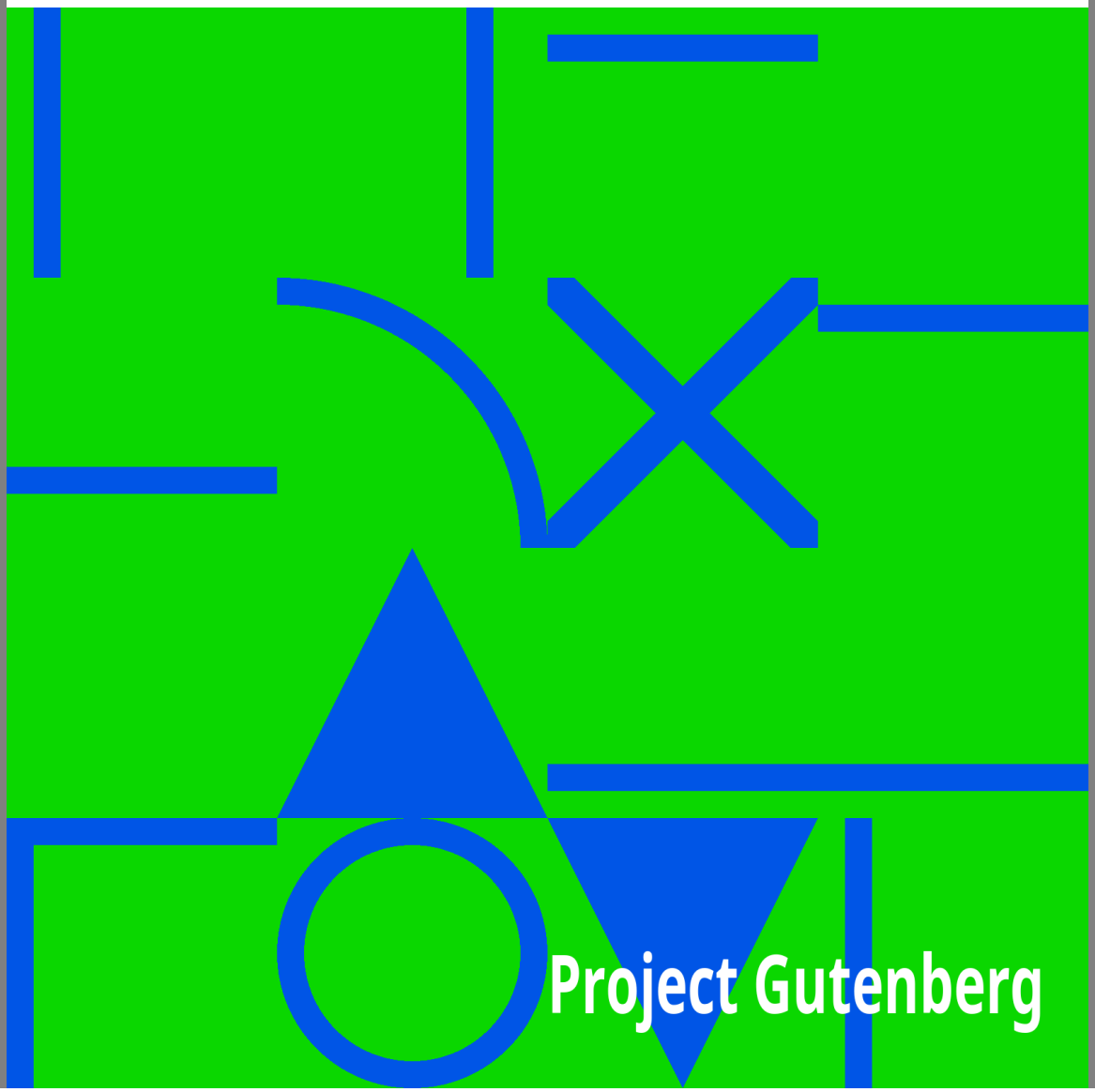

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THE FIVE ARROWS

BY ALLAN CHASE

RANDOM HOUSE - NEW YORK

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THE FIVE ARROWS

Chapter one

The governor's wife pointed across the bay to a speck in the black sky. Ground lights in Catanzas were focusing their blue shafts on the speck, moving as the plane moved, one light trying to lead the ship.

A thin stream of glowing red and orange tracer bullets soared up at the plane from the Catanzas side of the bay. A moment passed before the Governor's guests on the terrace of La Fortaleza could hear the muffled thud-thud of the distant ground batteries. Someone, the wife of a visiting government official, exclaimed, "My goodness, I've only seen this in the newsreels before!"

Now the plane veered, slowly, and the lights from the San Juan side joined the Catanzas batteries in pinning the plane to the dark clouds. The sleeve target fastened to the tail of the plane could now be seen from the terrace. Most of the Governor's guests gasped as the first bright jets of tracers missed the silver sleeve and sailed into the black void above it. The ack-ack batteries were speaking with more harshness now; one of them, planted between two brick buildings, added crashing echoes to their own reports as the guns went off.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor was still very much a topic of conversation on the island; the submarine nets in the bay were joked about at the dinner table, but the jokes arose from a profound sense of gratitude for the nets, the planes, the ships which were the island's defenses against the undersea raiders that stalked the sea lanes between the ports of the mainland and San Juan.

The plane shifted course again, now headed directly toward La Fortaleza. Through the increasing din of the ground guns, the Governor's young military aide, Lieutenant Braga, could barely hear the ring of the telephone nearest the terrace. He took the call, then returned to the terrace and tapped one of the guests on the shoulder. "It's for you, Mr. Hall," he said. "It's Tom Harris at Panair."

Matthew Hall stood up quietly and walked into the cavernous reception room. He walked carefully, with the steel-spring tread of a man who seems to expect the floor to blow up under him at any moment. For thirty-three years Matthew Hall had walked as other men. Since he was not conscious of his new walk, he could not say when it had become part of him. His friends had first noticed it in Paris, in '39, but had expected it to wear off as soon as the prison pallor disappeared. The pallor had gone; the walk remained.

Hall's head and shoulders and hands were part of this walk. He moved with his head forward and his shoulders hunched, with his hands slightly cocked, almost like a fighter slowly advancing to mid-ring. The shoulders were broad and thick, so broad that although Hall was of more than average height they made him appear shorter and chunky.

The face of Matthew Hall had changed, too, with his walk. There were the obvious changes: the deep channel of a scar on his broad forehead, the smaller one on his right jaw. The nose had changed twice, the first time in 1938 when it was broken in San Sebastian. It had swelled enormously and then knit badly and nearly two years later a New York surgeon had done an expensive job of rebreaking and resetting the nose. Some bones had been taken out and the once classic lines were now slightly flattened. The scars and the dented nose blended strangely well with the jaws that had always been a bit too long and the soft brown poet's eyes which had so often betrayed Hall. With his eyes, Hall spoke his contempt, his anger, his

amusement, his joy. The eyes unerringly spoke his inner feelings; they were always beyond his control.

Changes more subtle than the scars and the flattened nose had come over Hall's face within the past few years. It now had a queer, angry cast. His lips seemed to be set in a new and almost permanent grimace of bitterness. Also the right side of his face, the cheek and the mouth, had a way of twitching painfully when Hall was bothered and upset. And yet, as Governor Dickenson had already noted, Hall was not a completely embittered man. More often than not, his eyes would light up with a look of amused irony, the look of a man much moved by an immense private joke he would be glad to share with his friends if he but knew how to tell it properly.

When Hall had risen to leave the terrace, the Governor noticed that his cheek was twitching, but once he was alone in the reception room, away from the sight of the tracers and the target plane, Hall's face grew calm again. He sat down in the green armchair near the phone, picked up the receiver. "Yes, Tom," he said, "any luck?"

"Sure. I busted open a seat for you on the San Hermano plane for tomorrow at six."

"Was it much trouble, Tom?"

"Not much." Tom Harris laughed. "We had to throw Giselle Prescott off to make room for you. Know her?"

"God, no! But thanks a lot."

"I'll pick you up in the morning then. Good night, Matt."

Hall put the receiver back on the cradle. He sat back in the soft chair, oblivious of the crashing guns, the hum of the plane's engines, the others on the terrace. Only one thing was in his mind now—San Hermano.

It was some time before the young Puerto Rican lieutenant slipped gingerly into the room. "Mr. Hall," he said, softly, "everything O.K.?"

Hall smiled warmly. "My God," he asked, "you don't think the guns drove me in here?"

The officer blushed. "Fix you a drink?" he asked.

Hall shook his head, drew two Havanas from his jacket. "No, thanks. Cigar? It's from the one box I remembered to buy in Havana."

The boy was a non-smoker. He lit a match for Hall, waited until the older man relaxed with the burning cigar. Politely, he said, "I know you've been through plenty, Mr. Hall. I'm a soldier, but if ..."

"Plenty? Me?"

The lieutenant nodded. "*The Revenger*," he said, hesitantly. "I—I read your book."

"Oh, that," Hall said. "*The Revenger*." So *The Revenger* was plenty!

"If there's anything I can get you ..."

The boy's voice seemed to come from far away and Hall realized that he himself was staring into space and that the lieutenant must have sat there for a full minute waiting for an answer. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm really sorry. I guess I just get this way once in a while."

"It's my fault," Braga protested. "I should have known how hard it must be for you to talk about—it."

"*De nada*," Hall laughed. "I made a lecture tour last year and spent five nights a week talking about it for months. It's just that I'm—well, that I just catch myself staring at nothing at the craziest times. Maybe I do need that

drink. What's in the shaker there—Daiquiri? Good." He poured two Daiquiris from the jar on the sideboard, handed one to the lieutenant. "I know you don't drink, either," he said. "But I'm having this drink to toast victory—and you're a soldier."

When they touched glasses, the boy saw that amused look in Hall's eyes, the look he had seen earlier at the dinner table when one of the visiting officials had expressed such innocent amazement at the enormity of his first taxi bill in San Juan. "I'd better go back out there when I finish this drink," he said. "I'm glad nothing's wrong with you."

"You're a right guy, Lieutenant. Thanks for looking in." Hall returned to his chair as the boy walked out to the terrace. So *The Revenger* was plenty! And the kid, how old was he? Twenty? Not a day more. Which made him eighteen when the Nazi torpedo planes peeled off over the African skies and then roared in to send their tin fish into the guts of His Majesty's own *Revenger*. Which made him fourteen when the fighting began, fourteen when the German pilot officers clicked their heels and mouthed the new phrase "*Arriba España*" and flew the Moors from Spanish Morocco to the mainland and touched off the shooting stages of World War II. "*Ay, Teniente*," he muttered, "you've made me feel old as hell. Older."

Hall leaned back in his chair, tried to blow a series of smoke rings. He thought: But I'm not old. I've just seen things and done things and had things done to me. I'm not old at all.

After years of anonymity in various city rooms in the States, a brief turn as a byline correspondent in Washington, a still briefer career as a Broadway playwright, Matthew Hall had drawn an assignment as third-string man for the World Press in Paris. That was in 1935, when he was crowding thirty.

The job had introduced him to Europe, and carried him to Geneva, to Belgrade, to Bucharest, to Stockholm. Paris was the journalistic capital of the Continent; when things happened outside of Paris, it was a Paris man who was sent to the scene to cover. There he would find that the office had adequate coverage in the permanent man, and if he had any curiosity or craftsman's pride he would try to get the story behind the story. Hall had both. They led him to the strange half-world of tipsters, hounded opposition leaders, minor officials of ministries who would talk and produce documents for a fee, candid and cynical free-lance agents, wise old frightened politicians who sensed the coming catastrophe in their bones, correct and stiff Nazi advance agents and politely lavish native fascists who mixed queer brews for foreign correspondents. They were the *sources close to a key ministry, the influential elder statesmen, the prominent industrialists whose names cannot be used* who figured so prominently in the inside-Europe dispatches of the era.

July, 1936, had found Hall in Nice spending a long week-end as the guest of a prominent refugee banker from Germany. The banker was the "inside" prophet of the month in Parisian newspaper circles. His gospel was the slightly shopworn one about German industry being fed up with Hitler and willing to settle on Goering, Danzig and a few worthless colonies in Africa as the price for eliminating the "extreme Nazis" and returning to the family of Europe. "He's a damned Nazi himself," Hall had declared when the invitation reached his office, but the bureau manager was missing no bets. "I don't care what he is, Matt. He's a story. He's news. He's what they want to read about in Washington and in London and in Paris."

Hall never wrote his story on the refugee banker (who later turned up as a Nazi economist overlord in Denmark). On a blistering Sunday Paris had called him by phone. Hell was popping in Madrid. The regular Madrid man

was vacationing in the States. "Get to Madrid, Matt. Looks like you'll be busy there for a couple of weeks until it blows over."

Like many of his American colleagues, Hall traveled to Madrid during that first week of the war with the idea that in less than a month one side or another would have been installed in power and he himself would be back in Paris listening to the latest faker peddling the newest line of disguised Nazism from Berlin. But Hall was an honest man. What he saw interested and then intrigued and then enraged him. "This is no Spanish Civil War," he wrote to the Paris office in a confidential memo sent by courier. "This is the start of the second World War. It's the Germans and the Italians against the Spaniards. Maybe I'm crazy, but it looks to me like the British and the French are backing the fascists, while the Russians are trying to help the Republicans. How about sending someone in to cover the shooting for a week while I write a big story along these lines?"

He was answered in due time. "Stick to the military conflict between the Nationalists and the Loyalists. And don't send us any Red propaganda."

That was in October, when Caballero was preparing to quit Madrid in panic, and the Fifth Army was calmly preparing to hold the city, Caballero or no Caballero. Hall had long since lost his magnificent WP objectivity. Through the open mails he sent a letter of resignation to Paris. Antin in the Censura held the letter up, sent for Hall. The Spaniard hemmed and hawed and cleared his throat a dozen times and then he got up from his desk and embraced Hall and told him to sit down. Hall's Spanish was pretty good by then, good enough for Antin to speak to him in fluent Spanish rather than halting English. "The English I can read with my eyes. The Spanish I speak with my heart."

Was it that Hall was resigning because he loved the Republic? Yes, I guess you could call it that. (You could also call it a good craftsman's stubborn

ideas about how to cover a war, but you didn't.) Did Hall realize that, if he quit, an enemy of the Republic might be sent to take his place? No, Hall didn't think. Come to think of it, though, the office had Cavanaugh and Raney available and those two Jew-haters and Mussolini-lovers would be no friends of the Republic. You are a friend, a *compañero*, it is right that you know. We have so many problems with the foreign press. McBain from New York, we know he is a spy, he has links with the Falange. If we arrest him, the world hollers Red Terror. So we watch him, keep all his letters, hold up his cables. Thank God he is a drunkard; two SIM men keep him drunk most of the time. Maybe his office will fire him. You are a friend. You write the truth. Even a little truth by a friend whose editor chops up his cables helps the Republic.

Hall tore up his letter of resignation. When the Republic captured thousands of Italians after Guadalajara and Bruejega, Hall filed long stories based on interviews with the Blackshirts. When the Republic captured Nazi Condor officers and men at Belchite, Hall sent photographs of their documents to Paris with his stories.

New York kicked, and Paris warned Hall repeatedly. Finally Paris transferred him to the Franco side. That was at the end of '38, when the Republicans had seen their hopes dashed at Munich and the only thing that kept them going was the feeling that they could hold out until the Nazi Frankenstein finally turned on London and Paris. "Then France will have to rush arms and maybe a few divisions to us and the British fleet will have to patrol the Mediterranean and the Russian planes, unable to get through now, will be able to come in through France and through the Mediterranean." Antin figured it out that way, told it to Hall the week before some nice clean crusaders for Christianity let him have it with a tommy gun in the back in a Barcelona café.

The Falangistas were very glad to have Hall behind their lines. Their friends pulled some wires in New York and Washington and, after two months, Hall was fired, but by then his notebook was growing thicker and he elected to stay as a free lance. He was seeing the face of fascism for the first time, he wrote, and seeing it at close range. He would stay, job or no job. He stayed, and the Gestapo in San Sebastian wrote out an order and a rat-faced little aristocrat with an embroidered gold yoke and arrows on his cape was studying Hall's notes and smirking like a villain in a bad movie.

There were no charges and no explanations. They just slapped Hall into a cell in solitary, and once a day they handed him a bucket for slops and once a day he got a chunk of bread or a thin chick-pea stew. In the beginning he had hollered for the American consul, but the German guard would grin and say, "*No entiendo Español, Ich sprech kein Englisch*," and finally Hall just settled down to waiting for the end of the war.

Every now and then a smooth German major would have him brought out for questioning; that scar on his head and the scar on his chin were grim mementos of those sessions. The Spaniards were bad but the Germans were worse. The Italians were just hysterical. There was the day the Italian officer made the mistake of getting too close and Hall clipped him with a weak right hook. The Blackshirt screamed like a woman and clung to his eye; that was when they tied him to the wall and let him have it with the steel rods on his back.

And then, in April, the Republic keeled over in its own blood and the fascists decided to be generous to celebrate their victory. The Axis was now openly boasting that it had run the Spanish show; the worst that Hall could do would be to play into their hands by writing about how tough fascism was on any man fool enough to oppose the New Order. They were generous, they were fair. They gave him a practically new suit of clothes,

they returned his three hundred odd dollars, they even returned his notebook with nearly all of its original notes.

Hall went to Paris. He spent a week soaking in warm baths and eating and avoiding the WP crowd. During the week he cabled a New York book publisher he had met in Madrid in '36, when he had joined a group of American intellectuals attending an anti-fascist congress. He offered to turn out a book on his experiences as a correspondent and a prisoner in Franco Spain. It was a week before he got an answer, but the answer came with a draft of five hundred dollars.

The swelling had gone down in his nose by then, but he still had to breathe through his mouth. A doctor who'd looked at it wanted a hundred bucks for operating, but it meant two weeks of doing nothing but getting fixed up, and Hall hated to wait. "Later," he said, "later, when I finish my book."

He poured his notes and his guts into the book, and finished it in a month. When he was done he borrowed some money from a friend in the Paramount office and got a Clipper seat to New York.

His publisher, Bird, liked the book and rushed it to press. He also gave Hall another five hundred and sent him to his own doctor to have his nose fixed up.

It was a good book, perhaps good enough to justify Bird's gamble, only it reached the critics three weeks after the Nazi panzer divisions were ravaging Poland and the smart boys in Paris were wearing smarter correspondents' uniforms and filing fulsome stories on the genius of Gamelin and Weygand. "We'll have to face it, Matt," Bird said, "no one but you and I give a damn about Spain right now. I'm taking back copies left and right from the booksellers. No, the hell with the advances. The war's far from over. You'll do another book for me, and we'll make it all up."

Through Bird, Hall got a job as a war correspondent for a Chicago paper. They shipped him to London, where he stewed in his own juices for months, and then to Cairo to join the fleet. Hall was assigned to the *Revenger* and, when the Nazis sank her, he spent some three days on a raft with a handful of survivors. One of them died of his wounds on the raft, and another went raving mad and slit his own throat with the top of a ration tin.

Hall filed a story on the experience when he was brought back to Cairo, and Bird cabled "That's your new book." It was an easy book to write. He took a room at Shepheard's and pounded it out in three weeks. The British censors liked it as "a tribute to British grit" and arranged for a captain attached to a military mission bound for Washington by plane to deliver the manuscript personally to Bird. The story was still hot when the script reached New York. Bird sold the serial rights to a big national weekly that same day for thirty thousand dollars. A lecture agency cabled offering a guarantee of a fantastic sum for a three-month lecture tour. A book club chose *The Revenger*, the critics sang its praises, and Bird bought himself a house in the country.

Hall quit his job and made the lecture tour and wound up with a fat bank account and a permanent appreciation of the value of a chance plop in the ocean. For the first time in his life, he found himself with enough money to do exactly what he wanted to do. The Army doctors had shown him to the nearest door, but he had offers from magazines and syndicates to return to the war zones, and the radio wanted him as a commentator.

It was Bird who first learned of Hall's new plans. And Bird understood. "The Spanish War was round one," Hall told him. "South America was one of the stakes. The Falange had an organization in the Latin countries. The Heinies used to brag about it to me in San Sebastian. I'm going to South America to see it for myself. Maybe there's a book in it, maybe there isn't. I can afford to find out."

Cuba had been the first stop on this odyssey. There Hall had had some tough sledding, met some Spanish Republicans who knew him from Madrid, won the aid of a group of young Cuban officials and written two angry and documented magazine pieces.

From Havana, Hall had flown to Puerto Rico.

Hall had stopped thinking. The reverie into which the lieutenant had plunged him passed into a rapt consideration of the imperfect smoke rings he was blowing toward the ceiling.

Dickenson joined him. "Well?" he asked. "Is it San Hermano tomorrow?"

"I'm afraid so, Dick."

"I'm sorry to see you leave. We figured you'd stay for at least a month. What's so urgent in San Hermano?"

"That's what I mean to find out. All I know is what I read in the papers." He handed the Governor two copies of the San Hermano *Imparcial* he had found on a library table in the reception room while having a cocktail before dinner. They were the papers which had made him call Harris at Panair.

The first issue was three weeks old. It described the visit of an American Good-Will Commission to San Hermano, and told how the mission was received by Enrique Gamburdo, the Vice-President, rather than by Anibal Tabio, the President. In an oblique manner, the story went on to deny the "widespread rumor" that Tabio had deliberately insulted the Americans by not receiving them personally.

"I don't like the way they denied the rumor," Hall said. "I know that the paper is *imparcial* on the fascist side only."

The other edition of *Imparcial* was three days old. It was the latest copy available. It carried as its lead story the news that since Tabio's illness had taken a drastic turn for the worse, Gamburdo had prevailed upon a great Spanish doctor, Varela Ansaldo, to fly from Philadelphia to San Hermano in an attempt to save the President's life.

"And?" the Governor asked.

"I'm not sure. But it looks to me like a deliberate attempt to lay a smelly egg in Tabio's nest. Anyway, I did a little checking with Harris. I figured I'd be able to meet Ansaldo's plane, and I was right. The San Hermano Clipper overnights in San Juan, you know. Ansaldo is sleeping at the Escambrun tonight. Tomorrow we'll board the ship for San Hermano together."

"I still don't get it, Matt. Do you know this Ansaldo?"

"No. But he's evidently been invited to San Hermano by Gamburdo. And I found out a few things about Gamburdo in Havana," Hall said. "Some top-ranking Falange chiefs in the Americas always spoke highly of him in their letters. Especially the letters marked confidential."

"There you go again!"

"Don't. You know I'm not crazy."

"But Matt, neither is Gamburdo crazy. He wouldn't dare do what you're implying."

"Maybe. But I'm not thinking of Gamburdo as much as I am of Tabio. I like Anibal Tabio, like him a lot. I met him for the first time in Geneva in '35, when he was Foreign Minister. Then I met him again in '36, when he and Vayo and Litvinov were hammering away at the fat cats backing Franco. He was a real guy, Dick. One of the few statesmen alive who not only knew

that the earth is round but also that the people on this round earth like to eat and wear decent clothes and send their kids to college.

"I remember how in '37, after Halifax yawned all through his speech and then led the rest of the delegates in voting against Vayo's proposals, Tabio sat down with me in a little bar and ordered a light beer and told me very quietly that this was his cue. 'I must go home,' he told me, 'and see that it doesn't happen to my country.' That's how he pulled up his stakes and went back to San Hermano and ran for President."

"He's good, Matt. I know that."

"He's damn good. He's the best of the anti-fascist leaders on the Continent right now, Dick. He deserves all the help he isn't getting from us."

The Governor put the paper down with a sigh. "I'll tell you a secret, Matt," he said. "But it's really secret. You know that there's going to be a Pan-American conference on foreign policy in Havana in five weeks. Well, some of the smarter heads in Washington are getting worried. We're sending a delegation to the conference to ask all the nations down here to break with the Axis. And some of us are afraid that if Tabio is—well, not able to pick the San Hermano delegation, his government will remain neutral."

Hall stood up and began pacing between the couch and the chair. He pulled out a large white handkerchief and mopped the sweat on his face, his neck, his quivering hands. "God damn them all to hell," he said, "they're moving in on us in our own backyard and when you try to say a word in Washington they spit in your eye and tell you Franco is a neutral and a friend."

Dickenson drew a deep breath, exhaled slowly and audibly. "What's it all about, Matt?" he asked, softly. "Where does San Hermano come in?"

"I don't know a mucking thing yet. All I know is that it stinks to high heaven. Listen, Dick, I'm not crazy. You know that. In Washington they act

as if I'm crazy or worse when I try to tell them." Hall put his hand to the twitching right side of his face as if to keep it still. His outburst had completely dried his throat. He went to the sideboard, threw some ice cubes into a giant glass, poured soda over the ice.

The Governor watched him swallow the contents in huge gulps. "Better sit down, Matt," he said. "You'll blow a valve."

"I'm all right," he said. He put the glass down on the floor, ran the handkerchief over his neck. "There's one thing I do know, and it's killing me. I know the Falange is in this. It's all I have to know. I remember reading a fascist paper in jail in San Sebastian. There was a big map on the back page, a map showing Spain as the center of the Spanish World. An artist had superimposed the five arrows of the Falange over the face of Spain. The article under the map said that while one of the arrows pointed to Madrid, two pointed to the Philippines and the others pointed to Latin America. They weren't kidding, Dick. When the Japs marched into Manila they decorated the Philippine Falange for the fifth-column job the Falangistas performed for Hirohito. And there are twenty Falangist cells in Latin America for every one cell they had in Manila on December 6, 1941.

"And why not, Dick? It's the Germans who've always run the Falange. Today they run Spain. And they also run the Exterior Falange set-up. Maybe Falangismo as a philosophy is phony as all hell, and maybe its creed of Hispanidad, with all its blah about Latin America returning to the Spanish Empire, is just as phony. Maybe it doesn't make sense to us gringos. I'll grant that. But it is a nice Nazi horse on the dumb Spanish aristocrats who do Hitler's dirty work in the Americas. In German hands it's one of the dynamics of this war. I've seen it in operation, and I know. It's the gimmick that makes rich Spaniards fuel and hide submarines in the Caribbean—you know that for a fact yourself. It's the new amalgam which makes 'em look to Holy Mother Spain as the core of a new empire, it's ..."

"But granting all this, Matt, why must you go to San Hermano?"

Hall swallowed some soda. He put the glass back on the floor, grabbed the San Hermano *Imparcial* from the Governor's hands. Slowly, he crushed the paper and held it in front of Dickenson's face. "Do you know who publishes *El Imparcial*?" he asked. "I'll tell you. It's a fascist named Fernandez. In San Sebastian, during the war, he strutted all over town in a Falange officer's uniform browning his nose with all the top-ranking lice, the Germans, the Italians, the Franco crowd. He was there for months, making radio speeches and public appearances and getting cramps in the right arm from holding it up in the stiff-arm salute. I saw him a dozen times, if I saw him once."

"José Fernandez? I met him at a conference in Rio. He seemed like a pleasant enough chap," the Governor said.

"They're all pleasant. They can afford to be. You never met Ribbentrop and Otto Abetz, Dick. They were the most charming men in Europe before the war. But listen, last week in Havana I looked at a collection of pictures taken from the files of the chief of the Falange delegation for the Americas. There was one picture of a banquet held by the Falange in San Hermano late in 1936. It was a secret affair, only insiders and leaders. And there, on the dais, was Licenciado Enrique Gamburdo, big as life."

"Gamburdo!"

"Sure. It was a secret affair, all right. Not a word in the papers, and everyone present sworn to secrecy by a Bishop who was among the honored guests." Hall dried the sweat on his hands again. "But always at these affairs there's a man with a camera. Usually he's a Gestapo Heinie. Sometimes he's a Gestapo Spaniard or even a Gestapo Latin-American. A picture, just one picture, has to be made. It goes to the German consul or the Falange chief of the country and they have to forward it to the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin. The pictures back up the reports, you see, and,

besides, when you have a picture of a deacon trucking with a doxie in a bordello it's a good thing to threaten to show the deacon's wife if the deacon decides to return to the paths of righteousness."

"But are you sure, Matt?"

"I'm a good reporter. My job is to remember unimportant things, and to remember them well when they become important. If I'm wrong, I'll find out for myself in San Hermano."

The Governor accepted one of Hall's cigars. "God," he said, "I hope you're wrong, Matt."

Later, back in his hotel room, Hall stripped to his shorts, ran cold water over his wrists and the back of his neck. He poured some Haitian rum into a glass, drenched it with soda from the pink-and-green night table.

Outside, in the darkness, four boys were playing tag. Hall listened to the whispered padding of their bare feet as they flew from cobblestones to trolley tracks. He went to the wrought-iron balcony, stood there watching the undersized kids chasing each other up and down the narrow street. Two freighters rode at anchor in the harbor, their gray noses pointing at the pink Customs House. A soldier lurched down the street, barely missing the feet of an old *jíbaro* sleeping in the doorway of a dark store.

Hall returned to the desk. He wrote a short note to a friend in a government bureau in Havana—merely to say that he was leaving for San Hermano and that for the time being could be reached in care of Pan American Airways there—and a similar note to Bird. He decided to let his other letters wait until he reached San Hermano.

The kids who were playing tag disappeared. The only noise which broke the silence of the night now was the soft pounding of the presses in the

newspaper plant up the street. Hall sealed his letters and started to pack his bags.

The four boys reappeared with a whoop. They carried freshly printed magazines this time, and, as they ran down the street, first one then another took up the mournful cry: "*Puerto Rico Ilustrado! Il-us-traaa-dooohhh!*" They were no longer to be seen when Hall ran out to the balcony to look.

He took a cold shower, then lit one of his Havanas. The mosquito net which completely covered his bed annoyed him. He put out the light in order not to see the bars of the net frame. Silently, he railed against the sugar planters and their kept politicos for leaving the island prey to malaria. He had to remind himself that the net was his protection against malaria before he could crawl under the frame, but even then he climbed into bed with a cigar in his mouth.

The cigar was his protection, his secret weapon, against the claustrophobia the *mosquitero* gave him. There were no cigars in Franco's prisons, no cigars and no cool sheets and coiled spring mattresses, no soft breezes floating in from a harbor as ancient as the Conquistadores.

He lay under the net, naked and uncovered, blowing smoke rings at the cross bars above him. He thought of Anibal Tabio in Geneva, thin as a reed, his slender hand pointing to the pile of German and Italian documents del Vayo had brought to the League. He thought of Tabio and he thought of his three years in Spain and, thinking, he got worked up all over again.

It was not easy to think of the months of being trapped like an animal in a cage, of being pushed around by smirking men who had the guns, of watching the metal inkstand in the hands of the German major the second before it crashed into his own face. No, it was not easy, and the memory of San Sebastian led to the scarlet memory of the afternoon on the Malecon in Havana less than a month ago when Sanchez had pointed out to him two

leaders of the Falange at a café table and he started out to bash their heads together right then and there. Luis and Felix had had to grab him and wrestle him to the sidewalk, laughing and playing at being just three jolly boys who'd had a drink too much instead of two Spanish Republicans keeping a frenzied American from killing two men they detested and would gladly have killed themselves.

Hall sat up, shaking, covered with sweat. He crawled out of bed, stood barefooted on the tiled floor. An overwhelming feeling of loneliness came over him. He was lonely in his person, lonelier still in his inability to make any of his own people understand the gnawing hates and fears which had taken him first to Havana and then to San Juan and now—*quién sabe*? And then, realizing with an amused start that he was thinking in Spanish, he tore the net off the bed, threw the cigar away, and went to sleep.

Chapter two

Dr. Varela Ansaldo was traveling with his assistant, a young Dr. Marina, an American nurse named Geraldine Olmstead, and a Dominican passport. This much Hall was able to observe at the ground station, before the passengers for San Hermano and way points boarded the Stratoliner.

The Dominican passport interested Hall. He knew that the passports were for sale at an average price of a thousand dollars. Refugees starved and borrowed and sold their souls to scrape together a thousand dollars for one of the precious passports. When you met a Spaniard with a new Dominican passport, you seldom had to ask questions; you knew you were meeting a man whose life was not worth a nickel in Spain. And yet, in the day-old issue of *Time* the Clipper had flown in from Miami, the biography of Ansaldo carried no hint of the doctor's being in disfavor with Franco. Nor did the biography mention the physician's Dominican citizenship.

Hall read the *Time* biography again. *Scrupulously impartial during the Spanish Civil War, Ansaldo took no sides, remaining at his post as a healer under both nationalist and loyalist flags. With the end of war, Ansaldo accepted a Chair offered by the Penn Medical Institute in Philadelphia, assuming new position in October, 1939.* The story went on to describe some of the new operations Ansaldo had since performed.

Hall unbuckled his seat belt. He had a single seat on the left of the plane, the third seat from the front. Ansaldo's nurse had the seat in front of his. She sat across the aisle from Marina and Ansaldo, who shared a double seat. Hall sat opposite a pink-cheeked Dutchman of sixty who shared a seat with a very dark Brazilian. A State Department courier had the seat in front of the nurse. The other passengers included the wife of an American Army

officer, some Panair officials, two Standard Oil engineers, and some quiet Latin American government officials on their way back from Washington.

Most of the passengers, now that the plane had gained altitude, were trying to sleep. The little Hollander was wide awake, virtuously and happily wide awake with the morning heartiness of a man who has been going to bed and rising early all of his life. He beamed at Hall. "I see you and I are the only ones who had a good night's sleep, Mr. Hall." Then, laughing, he explained that he had recognized Hall from the picture on the jacket of his book before he had even heard his name announced by the steward on boarding ship. His accent was slight, but definite.

"Yesterday," he said, gesturing at Hall's seat, "Miss Prescott—a charming lady, by the way—and today another American writer. Ah, well, the damn wheel turns and comes up twice with the same value. Oh, I forgot. My name is Wilhelm Androtten."

Hall extended his hand across the aisle, gripped the hand Androtten offered him. It was a pudgy little hand, soft and white and pink.

"Yes," Androtten sighed. "I have quite a hell of a story of my own to tell about enemy actions. I too have been an actor in the drama. But of course I'm not a writer. Ah no, Mr. Hall," he waved a stiff little index finger back and forth in front of his glowing face, "I'm not going to suggest that you write my story. To me it is important as hell. But to the world? It is not as dramatic as the sinking of the *Revenger*. A thousand times no!"

The Hollander pulled an immense old-fashioned silver cigarette case from the pocket of his brown-linen suit. "Have an American cigarette? Good. Yes, mine is only the story of how the damn Japanese Army drove a poor coffee planter off his estates and then out of Java. And that is all, sir, except that as you may have guessed—I was the planter. Now I am, so to speak, a real Flying Dutchman, flying everywhere to buy coffee from the other

planters and then flying everywhere to sell it again. But I try to be jolly as hell and to bear my load like a Dutchman should, Mr. Hall."

"That *is* a story, Mr. Androtten," Hall said. "A real one." The strong light above the clouds rasped his sleep-hungry eyes. He put on his dark glasses, leaned his head back against the padded roll of the reclining chair.

"Do you really think my story is worth while, Mr. Hall? I would be honored as hell to tell you the whole story with all the damn facts, if you desire. I ... Are you getting off at Caracas?"

"No. I'm sorry. I go all the way through to San Hermano."

"Good, Mr. Hall. I go to San Hermano myself. Do you know the Monte Azul bean, sir? It's richer than the Java. A little Monte Azul, a little Bogota, some choice Brazilians—and you have a roast that will delight the rarest palates. Yes, San Hermano is my destination. San Hermano and the damn Monte Azul bean."

Hall gave up trying to stifle a series of yawns. "I'm sorry," he said. "I guess I didn't get enough sleep after all."

"Please sleep," Androtten said. "We'll have plenty of time to talk in San Hermano."

"Sure. Plenty of time." Hall opened the collar of his shirt, sank into a light sleep almost at once. He slept for over an hour, waking when the Standard Oil engineers in the rear seats laughed at a joke told by the Army officer's wife. The steady drone of the engines, the continuing sharpness of the light made remaining awake difficult. Hall closed his eyes again but there was no sleep.

Androtten and the Brazilian had found a common tongue, French, and in the joy of this discovery had also discovered a common subject. The

Brazilian was holding forth on the exotic virtues of one rare coffee, the huge diamond on his finger ring catching and distributing the light as he gestured. Androtten was trying to describe the various blends of Java.

Hall thought of Ansaldo and Marina and the nurse. Marina was about thirty, too dapper, too fastidious, his plaid sports jacket fitting too snugly over his rounded hips. On boarding the plane, the nurse had brushed against his arm, which he withdrew with a subconscious gesture of revulsion. Hall watched him now, buffing his nails with a chamois board. Ansaldo had also awakened, was reading one of the pile of medical magazines he had carried into the plane. The nurse was a blank, so far. All he could see of her was the soft roll of strawberry hair. She had a few faint freckles on her nose and full lips and it was ten to one that she was from the Midwest. But a blank.

The older doctor, Ansaldo, was about fifty, and had a stiff correctness that Hall had noticed immediately in the airport. He wore glasses whose horn rims were of an exaggerated thickness. His iron-gray hair, cut short and combed straight back, had an air of almost surgical neatness. He had the long horse face of an El Greco Cardinal, and behaved even toward his assistant and his nurse with a detached politeness. Marina's obvious and fawning devotion to the older man seemed to bounce off Ansaldo without effect. Hall put him down as an extremely cold fish, but a cold fish who would bear watching for reasons Hall himself could not quite define.

When the plane stopped in Caracas for refueling, Ansaldo, carrying a thick medical journal with his finger still marking his place, took a slow walk in the shade, Marina following at his heels like a puppy. Hall got out and lit a cigar and when he noticed the nurse looking at the exhibit of rugs and dolls set up in a stand at the edge of the airfield he walked to her side. "Indian-craft stuff," he said. "If you'd care to, I'll be your interpreter."

The girl took off her dark glasses, looked at Hall for a moment, and then put them on again. "I can't see too well with these darn things," she laughed. "Do you think I could get a small rug without giving up my right arm?"

"Your right arm is safe with me around, Madam. Perhaps you never heard of me, Madam, but in these parts I'm known as Trader Hall. Matthew Hall."

"You're hired. My name is Jerry Olmstead."

They sauntered over to the stand. The afternoon sun ignited the fires in her hair. She was taller than most women, and though her white sharkskin suit was well creased from travel, Hall could see that she had the kind of full shapely figure which made poolroom loafers whistle and trusted bank employees forget the percentages against embezzlers. Feature for feature, Jerry Olmstead's was not the face that would have launched even a hundred ships. Her forehead was too high, and it bulged a bit. Her blue eyes were a shade too pale for the frank healthiness of her skin. Her nose was straight and well shaped, but almost indelicately large. When she smiled, she displayed two rows of glistening healthy teeth which were anything but even and yet not uneven enough to be termed crooked.

Hall helped her select a small rug, agreed at once to the price asked by the Indian woman at the stand, and then had a long discussion in Spanish with the peddler about the state of affairs at the airport before giving her the money. "You see," he said to Jerry, "unless you bargain with these Indians, you're bound to get robbed." The rug cost Jerry something like sixty cents in American money.

"You'll be able to pick up some wonderful beaten-silver things in San Hermano," Hall said. "I'd be glad to show you around when we get there. In the meantime, can I get you a drink?"

"I'd love one."

The only drinks for sale in the canteen were cold ginger ale and lemonade. They had the ginger ale, and Hall learned that this was the girl's first trip out of the United States. "It's all so different!" she said, and Hall thought he would grimace but then the girl smiled happily and he watched the skin wrinkle faintly at the bridge of her nose and he smiled with her. "You'll like San Hermano," he said. "And I'd like to show it to you when we get there."

"Did you spend much time there?"

"Only a few days. I took a freighter back from Cairo two years ago and it put in at San Hermano."

"Say, what do you do, anyway?" Jerry asked.

"Don't sound so surprised. I'm a newspaperman."

"Were you a war correspondent?"

Hall nodded. "I even wrote a book."

Jerry looked into her glass. "I know it sounds terrible," she said, "but I haven't read a book in years. Was yours about the war?"

"Let's talk about it in San Hermano. Do I show you the town?"

"It's a date."

"That bell is for us," Hall said. "We'd better get back to the plane."

They left the canteen. Ansaldo and Marina were still walking in a slow circle. "Come on," Jerry said. "Meet my boss."

She approached Ansaldo. "Dr. Ansaldo," she said, "I'd like you to meet Mr. Matthew Hall. He's a newspaperman from the States. And this is Dr. Marina.

"Mr. Hall is showing me around San Hermano when we get there."

"How nice," Ansaldo said, and from his tone Hall knew that he meant nothing of the sort.

"But now we must hurry," Ansaldo said. "The plane is about to depart." He took Jerry's arm and they walked on ahead of Marina and Hall.

"Señor Hall, if you are going to write about the doctor's forthcoming operation," Marina said, "I would gladly help you. The doctor is the greatest surgeon of our times, perhaps, who knows, of all times. He is magnificent. In his hands, the scalpel is an instrument of divinity. It is more, it is divinity itself. I must tell you the story of the doctor's greatest operations, although all of them are great. I will help you. You will write a great article about the great operation."

"I am very grateful to you, doctor. I hope that in San Hermano you will have enough time to give me your counsel. After you, doctor." Hall took a last drag at his cigar as Marina climbed the plane ladder.

There was a mountain—the Monte Azul which produced the beans of Androtten's rhapsodies—and a plateau in the clouds and below the plateau lay the ocean and the city of San Hermano. The lights were going on in the city when Flight Eighteen ended on the airport in the plateau, for the city was five miles farther from the sinking sun of the moment. On the plateau, the airport lights blended with the brown-orange shades of dusk; in the city the lights cut through the classic blackness of night.

A smartly dressed colonel and a top-hatted functionary of the Foreign Office were waiting with two black limousines for the Ansaldo party. The man from the Foreign Office had cleared all the passport and customs

formalities. Jerry had just enough time to tell Hall that she and the doctors were to stay at the Bolivar before the cars started down the winding hill to San Hermano.

Hall rode to town with the rest of the passengers in the sleek Panair bus. He and Androtten were also bound for the Bolivar.

Riding into the valley, the bus descended into the night. It was a night made blacker by the war, as were the nights in San Juan and Havana and New York. San Hermano was the capital of a nation still at peace, but the maws of the war across the seas reached for the oil and coal of the world, and San Hermano could not escape this world. Three lights in every four on the Plaza de la Republica were out, for coal and oil furnished the power for the city's electricity. Two years earlier, Hall had asked Anibal Tabio why coal and oil had to turn the city's dynamos when the nation abounded in thousands of mountain streams which could be harnessed by men with slide rules and logarithm tables, and the gentle President had answered him in a sentence. "Because, my dear Hall, San Hermano has been in the twentieth century for barely a decade, while your own nation has been in our century for forty years." And tonight, looking at the ancient Plaza from the window of his room on the third floor of the Bolivar, Hall remembered Tabio's words with disturbing clarity.

From the balcony of his hotel room, Hall could see both San Hermanos, the Old City and the New. Everyone spoke of the two cities in these terms—the geographers, the tourist guides, the inveterate *Hermanitos* themselves.

The Old San Hermano had been founded by the Conquistadores in the sixteenth century, a walled speck on the shores of an ocean, a fortress and a thatched church, a handful of flimsy huts. In a century, the thatched church became a proud, gloomy Cathedral; one of the walls was knocked down, and in its place was the cobbled Plaza de Fernando e Isabel. The Plaza was

Spain in the New World; opening on to its cobbles stood the huge Moorish stone palaces designed by architects brought over from Seville, the palace of the Captains-General who served as colonial governors, the fortified mint, the Cathedral, the home of the Governor's elder brother, the Duke of La Runa. Enslaved Indians and later chained Negroes from the African coasts had carried on their backs the square stones Spanish masons cut and formed for the edifices of the Plaza, first the Cathedral, next the Governor's Palace and the Mint.

Then, in the days of Hidalgo, Bolivar, and San Martin, the ancient Plaza of the Conquistadores became the Plaza de la Republica, and for a few glorious hours the new nation was in tune with its century. But the great Liberators of the times were to die in embittered exile, far from the scenes of their brightest victories. For one swing of the pendulum the liberated lands teetered on the dizzy heights of freedom, and then the pendulum swung back and stopped swinging for a century. The land remained in the hands of the Spanish nobles, and they won their war against the Industrial Revolution, and all that remained of the hour of triumph was the name the Liberators had given the old Plaza and a hollow Republic controlled by the landowners.

In ways more subtle, but no less real than the old ways, the Republic became a colony again, except that the nation was no longer ruled by a crown but by new and even more potent symbols: the sign of the pound, the sign of the dollar, the sign of the franc. The new order brought a new San Hermano, a new Western city built around the rims of the old fortress seaport. It was a strange and often beautiful mélange of French villas and British banks and American skyscrapers and German town houses.

The old Constitution of the Liberators gave way to a series of native dictators who waxed rich as the servants of the foreign owners of the metals and minerals discovered under the nation's soil, of the foreign business men

who never saw San Hermano but built vast abattoirs near the wharves where skinny *Hermanitos* earned a few pennies a day for slaughtering and then loading endless herds of native cattle in the dark holds of foreign ships.

They were ruthless men, the dictators who sat in San Hermano as pro-Consuls of the foreigners and the landowners, ruthless men who, for their share of the profits of the foreigners, of the endless rivers of pesetas the landowners sent to Spain, maintained armies of cutthroats to put down any attempt at rebellion against the new existing order.

The last of these dictators to sit in San Hermano was General Agusto Segura. More than a decade had passed since Segura had died in bed and a junta of professors and miners wrested the control of the nation from Segura's henchmen. There had been little bloodshed when the Junta took over; after thirty years, the Segura regime, or what was left of it, had just collapsed of its own rottenness.

Hall thought of Segura, and the state he had ruled, and then, again thinking about Tabio while he stared into the shadows of the darkened Plaza de la Republica, Hall remembered Tabio's quiet remark about his country's having been in the twentieth century for barely a decade. A slim decade, which began with a world in confusion and was now ending with a world in flames. But if the country weathered these flames, it would be because Tabio, instead of running for the Presidency after the revolution which swept out the remnants of Segurista power, had chosen to serve as Minister of Education for nearly ten years. Hall was willing to stake his life on this, ready to bet that the phenomenal free educational system Tabio had set up for children and adults would, in the final analysis, be one of the nation's chief bulwarks against fascism.

He changed his clothes and went out for a walk through the crooked streets of Old San Hermano before turning in. Many lights were burning in the

fourth floor of the Presidencia, the floor on which the President had his apartment. Military guards were standing listlessly at the entrances to the gilded building.

Hall walked along the Plaza until he came to the Calle de Virtudes, which led to a little café on the street opposite the rear entrance of the Presidencia. It had no windows but giant shutters which were folded against the wall when the café was open for business. The café itself stood on a corner, the sidewalks on both sides of the place covered with tables and chairs. Wooden lattice fences, painted a bright orange, screened the tables from the pedestrian's section of the sidewalk. Inside, near the bar itself, two boys with guitars were playing and singing the tragi-comic peasant songs of the south.

He took a sidewalk table, ordered a meat pie and a bottle of beer, and then went to the small hotel next to the café to buy a sheet of paper, an envelope, and an air-mail stamp. He asked for a telephone book, looked up the names under Gomez, copied the address of one Juan Gomez, and returned to his table. There he bought a newspaper from a boy peddling the latest edition of the evening. The front page carried a story about Ansaldo: the distinguished visiting medico was to spend the next day conferring with local doctors who had been treating the President. In one of the back pages, under Arrivals, there was a line about the illustrious author and war correspondent Dr. M. Gall who reached San Hermano by Clipper; Dr. Gall was the noted author of *The Revenger*, even now being produced in Hollywood.

The paper was put aside for the meat pie. When he was done with the food, Hall pushed his plates away and spread his sheet of lined writing paper on the table before him. He called for some ink, filled his fountain pen, and wrote a letter in Spanish to a "Dear Pedro."

It was a rambling, innocuous letter which started out with family gossip about a forthcoming marriage of a cousin, the marriage prospects of the writer's eligible daughter, the letter received from Cousin Hernando who was happy on his new ranch and whose good wife was expecting another child soon. Then the letter went on to say that "I suppose you have read in the Havana papers that our President is ailing. Today there arrived in our city the distinguished Spanish doctor Varela Ansaldo. He is to treat the President. Perhaps I am very stupid, but is he not the surgeon who operated so well on the throat of your dear Uncle Carlos?" The letter then continued on for another page of family gossip and regards and requests that Pedro embrace a whole list of dear cousins and aunts. It was signed, simply, "Juanito."

Hall read the letter twice, sealed it, and addressed the envelope to Pedro de Aragon, Apartado 1724, La Habana, Cuba. Pedro de Aragon was a myth. Mail at this box was picked up by Santiago Iglesias, an officer of the Spanish Republican Army whom Hall had met again in Havana. Iglesias did at one time have an uncle named Carlos; the uncle had died on the Jarama front from a fascist bullet that tore through his throat and killed him instantly. Hall had arranged to write to Iglesias under names chosen from the phone books of different cities if the need arose. He scribbled the name and address of Juan Gomez on the back of the envelope, left some money on the table, and walked back to the Plaza. There he dropped the letter in a mailbox and continued on his way to the Bolivar.

There was a new clerk on duty when Hall reached the hotel, a wiry man of forty-odd whose yellow silk shirt clashed with both his black mohair jacket and his long, lined face. Hall asked for the key to Room 306 in Spanish.

The clerk cleared his throat and answered in English. "There was messages," he said, handing the key to Hall with a sheaf of slips. "And also this." From under the counter he drew a sealed letter written on heavy paper

and bearing the neat blue imprint of the American Embassy at San Hermano on the envelope.

Hall frowned and tore open the envelope.

"Señorita the Ambassador's daughter telephoned twice," the clerk said.

"Thank you."

"It's on this slip, Mr. Hall."

"Thanks again." He read the few handwritten lines of the letter. It was an invitation from the Ambassador's daughter, Margaret Skidmore, to attend the Ambassador's party at the Embassy on the 5th. That was two nights off.

There was a message from Jerry Olmstead. She had phoned from her room to leave word that she had retired for the evening but would meet him in the dining room at ten for breakfast. Hall noticed that the clerk was watching him intently as he read the girl's message, but when he started to read the next slip the clerk interrupted him.

"It's from Mr. Roger Fielding," he said. "I took the message myself. He is a very nice person. An Englishman."

On the slip the clerk had written, "Mr. Fielding is very sorry you were not in because it is important. He will call you again."

"My name is Fernando Souza," the clerk said, extending his hand. "I am very happy to meet you."

Hall put the papers down on the desk and shook hands with the clerk. They had a meaningless chat about the rigors of wartime travel and the dimout in peaceful San Hermano and Hall learned that the Englishman Fielding was in the tall Lonja de Comercio building and very decent. "I have been at this desk for many years and in this position one meets many people," the clerk

said, and he went on amiably chatting about what one could see on different one-day tours from the city.

"It is very sad about the President," Hall said, and then the clerk reddened and he forgot to speak English. "The Educator must live," Fernando Souza said. "If the Educator goes, the nation goes."

"I know," Hall said. "I admire Don Anibal greatly."

"*Momentico, Señor. El teléfono.*" After nine, the night clerk had to handle the switchboard at the Bolivar.

It was Fielding again. Hall picked up the phone on the marble counter. "Yes, Mr. Fielding," he said, "I'm sorry I missed your first call."

"Not at all, old man. Not at all. Damned decent of you to answer my call now, what with the hour and all that." The voice which came through Hall's receiver was the raspy, crotchety, bluff voice of a movie Britisher, the diction almost too good to be true. "I must say it was a good surprise, a good surprise. The paper tonight, I mean, even if they called you Dr. Gall. But what can they do if the H is silent in Spanish?"

"I've been called Gall before."

"Of course you have, of course you have." The man at the other end of the wire cleared his throat with a loud harumph. "What I'm calling about, Mr. Hall, is—well, damn it all, what with the war and all that I guess we have a right to keep a tired traveler from going to bed the second his plane reaches the end of his road. I think it rather urgent we have a bit of coffee and a bit of a chat tonight. Really, old man, I think it is urgent."

"At what time?" Hall asked.

"I'm at home now," Fielding said. "I can get to Old San Hermano in an hour. Souza can tell you how to get to my office. Nice chap, that Souza. Straight

as a die."

"Good."

"The office is about ten minutes from the Bolivar by cab, if Souza can get you a cab. Suppose I ring you at the Bolivar when I reach the office?"

"That will be fine. See you soon." Hall put the phone down and turned to Souza. "He said you are straight as a die," he said.

"Mr. Fielding is a very decent Englishman," Souza said. He offered no further information about Roger Fielding, and Hall decided against asking any questions.

"If you are meeting him at his office, I had better get you a cab," Souza said, and then, sensing the hesitation in Hall's eyes, he quickly added, "it would be better. Walking at night is dangerous, especially in Old San Hermano, since the lights went out. There are many—accidents."

"O.K.," Hall said. "Look, I'm going upstairs to catch a little sleep. When Fielding calls back, get me that cab and send up a pot of coffee. And it's been good meeting you, even if Fielding does say you are straight as a die."

Souza did not get the joke, but he knew that Hall was trying to joke and he laughed.

Hall went to his room, took off his shoes and his suit, and fell across the bed. He dozed off wondering why he had agreed so readily to meet the man with the tailor-made British diction.

At ten-fifteen his phone rang. "Mr. Fielding called ten minutes ago. I have your cab ready now. He is a very reliable driver."

"Good. How about my coffee?"

Souza laughed. "The only waiter on duty is a *cabrón*, Señor. Mr. Fielding will have much better coffee for you, anyway."

Hall chuckled as he washed the sleep out of his eyes with cold water and combed his hair. The waiter is a *cabrón*! There was one for the book. Hall made up a song while he dressed, a song about yes we have no coffee today because the son of a gun is a dirty *cabrón* so we have no coffee today.

Souza slammed his palm down on the bell twice when the elevator let Hall into the lobby. "Pepito!" he shouted.

The biggest cab driver Hall had ever seen outside of the United States bounded into the lobby from the blackness of the San Hermano night. He advanced toward the desk in seven-league strides, wiping his right hand on the blouse of his pale-blue slack suit and taking off his white chauffeur's cap with the other hand. He hovered over Hall like a mother hen.

"Pepito," Souza said, "this is Señor Hall." This he said in Spanish. In English, he again told Hall that the man was a very reliable driver.

"*Con mucho gusto*, Señor 'All. *Me llamo* Delgado." Sheepishly, the giant offered his hand to Hall.

"I am much pleased," Hall said. "Shall we start now?"

Pepito Delgado led Hall to a blue 1935 LaSalle parked in front of the Bolivar. "She is my own machine after I make the last payment next month," Delgado said. "I am glad you speak Spanish. It is the only language I know." He drove Hall to the ten-story Comercio building in a few minutes.

When Hall tried to pay him, Delgado shook his head happily. "You'll pay me later," he smiled. "I'll wait for you."

"But I may be hours," Hall protested.

Delgado called upon the Saints in a series of genially blasphemous exhortations. "Mother of God," he said, "it is bad luck not to make a round trip with the first American of the season. I'll wait and not charge you more than two pesos for the whole trip."

"I do not wish to rob you," Hall said. "Wait, and we shall make a fair price later."

He entered the Comercio building, but as the doors of the elevator closed and he started on his way up to the seventh floor Hall knew that Delgado was only playing the fool and was in fact no man's fool at all, and it bothered him. The right side of his face twitched slightly as he left the car and walked down to the bend in the hall leading to Room 719.

Chapter three

The frosted glass door of Room 719 bore the words, "Roger Fielding Y Cia." The anteroom was dark, but Hall could see the dim form of a man sitting in a lighted inner room. He knocked on the glass without trying the knob. In a moment, the light snapped on in the anteroom, and the man from the inner office opened the hall door.

"Mr. Hall?" he asked. "I'm Roger Fielding. Welcome to San Hermano. And please come inside."

Fielding fitted to the last detail the mental image Hall had conjured of the man on the phone. Genial, peppery, he not only talked like a Hollywood Englishman, he was a casting director's dream. Let the call go out for a man to play a retired India colonel, a British Ambassador, the Duke of Gretna Green, the popular professor of Chaldean Culture at Oxford, the Dean of Canterbury or the Chief of Scotland Yard, and Fielding was the man who could slip into the role without even changing from street clothes to costume. Fielding was the man, complete to the faintly grizzled face with the gaunt features, the dazzling plaid jacket, the thick-walled Dunhill pipe with the well-caked bowl.

He ushered Hall into the inner office, whose shades were all drawn to the sills. There was a large mahogany desk at the window; against the wall stood a long table bearing a row of glass coffee makers, a tray of demi-tasse cups, and a series of earthen canisters. On the wall above this table hung a large sepia-tinted photograph of London, taken about 1920. It faced a large print of a cottage and a brook in the Shakespeare country. This engraving hung over a row of four filing cabinets with steel locks. The walls were

further decorated with framed certificates of Fielding's membership in coffee associations of San Hermano, Rio and New Orleans.

"Sit down, sit down," Fielding urged, pulling a comfortable leather chair to the side of his desk for Hall, and taking the swivel chair behind the desk for himself. The highly polished desk was bare, except for a calendar pad and a folded red-leather picture frame whose picture faced Fielding.

"I'm in coffee, you see."

Hall glanced up at the certificates and the long table. "I see," he said.

"How was your trip? Not too tiring, I hope? That's the sad thing about planes. Faster than ships, but rather confining."

"It was not too bad," Hall said. "Besides, I stole an hour's cat nap at the hotel while waiting for you to get to town."

"Good for you," Fielding said. "I like a man who can steal an hour's sleep when the spirit so moves him. May I make you some coffee to keep you awake, though?"

"If it's not too much trouble."

The Englishman was already at his coffee table. He took the pipe out of his mouth, pointed with the end of the curved stem at one of the canisters. "I guess we'll mix you a little of that Monte Azul with some of this light roast from the south," he said. "If that doesn't sit well, I have two dozen other roasts you can try."

Hall asked him how good a blend would result from the mixture of Monte Azul, Bogota, and the various Brazilian growths Androtten had described to the Brazilian on the plane.

"Ah," Fielding smiled, "so you know coffees, too?"

"Not at all. My education started on the plane." Hall described Androtten, and told Fielding of the Dutchman's experiences in Java and his theories of the perfect blend.

Fielding set some coffee and water into one of the vacuum makers, put a match to the alcohol burner. "Androtten," he mumbled. "I don't remember meeting him before. However, if it's the Monte Azul bean he's after, I'll venture he'll be in to see us before the week is over. Let me see, Androtten ..." He picked up his phone, asked for a local number. "Hello," he said into the phone. "Sorry to call so late, old man. About a chap named Androtten. A Hollander. Blitzed out of Java by the Nippos. Of course. In coffee. Came in tonight on the Clipper to buy Monte Azul for blending. Know him? I see. Well, thanks, anyway."

The Englishman put the phone away. "One of my countrymen," he explained. "He's not in Monte Azul and I'm not in southern crops. We help one another in a case like this. Incidentally, he never heard of your Androtten." He chatted aimlessly about the coffee business until the coffee in the vacuum maker was ready, then he poured it into a small jug and brought the jug and two demi-tasse cups to the desk. "Sugar?" he asked.

Hall had lost his taste for sugar in San Sebastian. "I have it black and pure," he said.

"That's the only way to enjoy real coffee, Mr. Hall." Fielding took a key from his pocket and went to the first filing cabinet. "However," he said, "it wasn't to talk about coffee that you were generous enough to come here tonight. Not to talk about coffee." He pulled a brown-paper portfolio out of the file and returned with it to the desk. He undid the strings that bound the portfolio, removed a manila folder.

"I think you had better pull your chair around and sit next to me here," Fielding said. "We have to look over some things in this file."

Hall moved both the chair and the jug of hot coffee. From his new position, he could see that the leather folding frame on the desk contained two photos of what was evidently one person. One photo showed a young man of twenty-odd standing near a stone wall in what was undoubtedly England; the other photo was the young man as a laughing child in a pony cart.

"I lost my boy," Fielding mumbled, absently. He tapped the ashes from his pipe out into an ash tray on the window sill, filled it again with new tobacco from a worn ostrich pouch. Hall could see a thin, rheumy film cover the Englishman's eyes.

"The war?" Hall asked, softly, but if Fielding heard him he gave no indication that he had.

Fielding held a lighted match over the filled bowl of his pipe, started it burning with deep, sucking draughts. "Ah, your book," he said, when the pipe was burning. "You are a man of courage, Hall. You showed real guts. The kind of guts our Nellie Chamberlain didn't have when England needed them most."

Hall poured fresh coffee into both his and Fielding's cups. "Thank you," he said. "I tried to do it justice." He told him what the British censor in Cairo had said when he saw the manuscript.

The grizzled Englishman took the pipe out of his mouth, looked at Hall with amazement and disgust. "British grit, my foot!" He bellowed. "The *Revenger* was doomed the day Nellie Chamberlain decided to back Franco. I'm talking about your other book, Hall, *Behind Franco's Lines*. Any fool can get a battleship shot out from under him, but it takes a man ..." Suddenly he stopped, because both Hall and he were looking at the photos of the young man who was once a laughing boy in a canary-colored pony cart.

He opened the folder. A photostat of a multi-paged typewritten report lay on top of the neat pile of papers in the folder. "Now then, Hall, to get to the point. When I read that you had arrived in San Hermano, well, frankly, Hall, I thought it was the answer to my prayers. I know I'm a garrulous old man, but that comes from talking into the prevailing winds for so long that I just can't help myself."

"I know what you mean," Hall said. "Only I never thought of it in that way. I thought of it in terms of talking to a blank wall."

"Be it as it may, Hall, I don't think I'll be talking at a blank wall when I speak to you. As I said, there is a point to this meeting, and the point is brief. Hall, the Falange is in San Hermano, and it is up to much trouble."

"The Falange!"

"Oh, I know what you are thinking. Tabio made it illegal and it had to disband and all that. But Tabio's government never threw the whole Falange crowd into jail, where they belong, and they are still getting their orders from the Spanish Embassy."

Hall passed a hand in front of his smarting eyes. "Did you say they're up to trouble?" he asked.

"I said just that, Hall. Did you ever hear of the Cross and the Sword? Sounds like the name of a ha'penny thriller. Have you seen one of these since you arrived in San Hermano?" He handed Hall a gold lapel emblem; it was a sword with a blazing hilt, the letters ATN engraved across the cross piece of the hilt.

"The ATN stands for Acción Tradicionalista Nacional, but no one calls them that any more than they call the Nazis by their formal name. You know, National German Socialist something or other. It's a bad business, Hall, a very bad business. The Cross and Sword, alias the Falange Española."

"Are they very strong?"

"They don't parade around the streets in their blue shirts as they did until Tabio clamped down in '40, and they don't pack the Cathedral in their Falange uniforms any more to hold special masses for the rotten soul of that young snot old Primo de Rivera whelped. The Cross and the Sword is not like that. But go to the San Hermano Country Club or a meeting of the Lonja de Comercio or to a fashionable party in the country and every tailored jacket you see will have a Cross and a Sword pinned to the lapel.

"Go to a little country village the day after the local school teacher was murdered on some lonely dark road. The *campesinos* stand around muttering 'The Cross and the Sword is guilty,' and the next night the home of some local Spanish landowner goes up in smoke. Then it's only a matter of hours before the Cross and Sword members in San Hermano are raising hell because a fellow Cross and Sword member had his house burned down. They tell everyone that's what happens when you have a Red regime which forces a gentleman to sell his land to the government and then sells the land back to the peasants who have to borrow the money from the government to pay for the land."

Hall turned the Cross and Sword emblem over in his fingers. "That's what happened in Spain," he said. "It happened in just that way."

"Of course it did, Hall. Of course it did. Now look here. Look at this." From the bottom of the pile of documents in the folder, Fielding extracted a map of the nation's coastline.

"Here," he said, "is the coast. Now note these islands. I have numbered some of them in red ink. Now take this island, Number Three. Looks like an ink blot, doesn't it, now? Not much of a place for anything. Just a bunch of volcanic caves and some quite useless land. Good for grazing a few head of sheep, but not too good even for that. Belongs to a chap named Segundo

Vardenio. Been in his family for years, over three hundred years. Own the island, own thousands of acres on the shore facing the bloody island. I know the whole family. More Spanish than the Duke of Alba, that family.

"Well, sir, they were all in the Falange. Segundo Vardenio was one of the big leaders of the Falange in the country. Used to wear his blue shirt and his boots and give his damned stiff-arm salute all over the place. And what do you think goes on at his island, Hall? I'll tell you. Oil and submarines, submarines and oil. The Vardenio lands on the shore are in sugar. They have a narrow-gauge Diesel railway of their own on the estates. Understand, Hall, a *Diesel railway*? The locomotives and the submarines burn the same type of oil."

"German subs?"

"Hun subs and only Hun subs, Hall. Look here. Look at this report. I sent it to the chief of Naval Intelligence at our Embassy. On the 29th of September, 1940, a Hun sub anchored off Vardenio's island. A small launch belonging to the Vardenio family towed the sub into the largest of the sea caves on the island. The sub took on a load of Diesel oil, fresh fruit, meat, cigars, razor blades and a sealed portfolio. I don't know what was in that portfolio. Three days later, the British freighter *Mandalay*, carrying beef and copper from San Hermano, was torpedoed and sunk by a Nazi submarine at approximately this point." Fielding held a ruler between an X mark in the ocean and the island.

He continued to read the report aloud, running a bony finger under the words as he read them, pausing now and then to sneer at his detractors in the British Embassy or to chuckle at some particular sarcasm written into the report.

The facts in the report were set forth in great detail. They dealt with other submarine anchorages, with the role of the Cross and the Sword on the

waterfront, and with the beginnings of an organized ring of sabotage. The report ended with the account of the events which followed the visit of the *Ciudad de Sevilla*, a Spanish liner, to the port of San Hermano.

"Look here, Hall," Fielding said. "Listen to this. On the twentieth of September, '41, the *Ciudad de Sevilla* docked in San Hermano at four-ten in the afternoon. At approximately five o'clock, the radio operator of the Spanish liner, one Eduardo Jimenez, left the ship and proceeded to a bar on the Paseo de Flores, the bar known as La Perrichola. There he met with two unidentified men, one of whom was later identified as a provincial leader of the Cross and the Sword. The three men went to a brothel near the waterfront, and at exactly ten o'clock left the brothel and got into a waiting sedan which, by a roundabout route, took them to Calle Galleano 4857, a quiet villa in the west suburb.

"The villa belongs to Jorge Davila, a lawyer for some of the great landowning families of the south. Davila's record as one of the leaders of the now illegal Falange and an organizer of the Cross and the Sword has been covered in my previous report, dated July 7th of this year." Fielding poured some fresh coffee for Hall and himself. "Tomorrow or the next day I can show you the report in question, Hall. But to proceed with this report.

"At Davila's home, a group of Cross and Sword leaders were waiting for the three men in the sedan. They had a long meeting, lasting over five hours. Then eight men, including the Spanish ship's officer, left the house and entered two fast cars of American make. The cars proceeded to the town of Alcala, in the sugar lands some seventy miles from San Hermano.

"In the morning, there was no trace of the eight men in Alcala. That night, the sugar fields of the English planter, Basil Greenleaf, were set on fire by incendiary flames started in over twenty different parts of his acreage at the same time. Two of Greenleaf's employees who were attempting to fight the

blaze in the east field were killed by rifle fire. One of them lived long enough to stagger to the road where he told his story to the Greenleaf foreman, a man named Esteban Anesi.

"I must call your attention, sir, to the fact that Greenleaf was the only planter in the Alcala region who had contracted to sell his crop to Great Britain, and that the fire took place exactly two weeks before the harvest time.

"Eduardo Jimenez was next seen in San Hermano the day after the fire, when he appeared in the Municipal Police Headquarters in what was evidently a state of extreme intoxication. He complained that on leaving his ship on the twentieth, he had gone to a bar for a drink, met up with two pimps, and had then been taken to a brothel where, after two days of drunken revelry, he had been cleaned out of his life's savings and then been carried out to sleep it off in an alley off the Calle Mercedes. Having made his complaint, he passed out. A police doctor examined him, recommended a good night's sleep."

Fielding held his finger under the word *sleep*. "Hah," he roared. "Damn clever, the bastards! Now then, where was my place? Oh, yes, good night's sleep. Yes."

"In the morning, Jimenez awoke, vomited, and started to yell for the jailer. He wanted to know what he was doing in a cell, and when shown his complaint, he expressed innocent amazement. He could not recall a thing. The warden gave him a hearty breakfast and sent him on his way. Jimenez joined his ship, which sailed for Spain that afternoon with a cargo of beef."

The case of Eduardo Jimenez was the last in the report. Fielding put the copy aside and leaned back in his chair. "Was this worth your while, Hall?" he asked.

Hall grinned. "You have the necessary proof?"

"Absolutely. To the last word, old man. To the last word."

"May I have a copy of your report?"

"Of course. I hope you will get better results, though."

"May I ask an impertinent question, sir?"

"Be as impertinent as you wish. I'm sixty-four years old, Hall, and if I can't put up with Yank impertinence in this late stage, I deserve no sympathy."

"Well then, and don't answer if you think me too brash, Fielding, it's simply ..."

"Hold on!" Fielding held up a restraining hand. "Let me write your question out on this slip of paper and after you ask it, I'll show you what I've written." He scribbled a few words on the paper, covered them with his left hand.

"Are you British Intelligence?" Hall asked him.

Fielding handed Hall the slip of paper. On it was written: *Q. Fielding, old man, are you a British agent? A. No, my fine impertinent friend. Believe it or not, I am not a British agent.*

He was not smiling when he put a lighted match to the slip of paper and watched it burn to ashes in the bronze tray. "As a matter of fact," he said, soberly, "I am not in very good repute at the British Embassy. I organized a dinner of the more sensible people in the British colony here in '38 and, after I'd made a blistering speech against Munich and non-intervention in Spain we all signed a row of a cable to Nellie Chamberlain. They have me down as a sort of an eccentric and a Red. Perhaps I am eccentric, but I'm no more a Red than poor Professor Tabio or your own Mr. Roosevelt."

"I've been called both things before myself."

"I'll bet you have, Hall. I'll bet you have. Let's have another jug of coffee and look through some more reports. Can you stay awake for an hour or so?"

"I can stay up all night."

"Well, maybe you can. But I'm not as young as I used to be. We'll finish the reports in this folder and call it a night. But first—the coffee."

The aroma from the jug warmed Hall's senses. In the cell at San Sebastian he would awake at night dreaming that he was smelling the sweet vapors of a fresh pot of coffee boiling away near his pallet. "God," he said, "I must tell you about what this smell means to me some day."

"There's nothing like it," Fielding agreed. "Now let me see, here's a photostat of a letter from the Embassy acknowledging the receipt of the report I just read, and here ... Ah...." He started to turn the next letter over, but Hall, reading the letter-head, laid a hand on the sheet.

"May I?" he asked.

Fielding handed him the letter. It was on the stationery of the International Brigade Association in London, dated January, 1938.

"The action on the Jarama front ... bitter ... your son Sergeant Harold Fielding leading squad of volunteer sappers ... missing in action ... thorough check on records of hospitals and field stations on that front ... no record of Sergeant Fielding ... we therefore regret ... must be presumed dead...."

The father of Sergeant Fielding held the picture of the boy in front of Hall. "This photograph," he said, heavily. "It was taken a year before he went to Spain. You didn't, by any chance, happen to know the lad, did you, Hall? He was my only child. Completing work on his Master's in biochemistry at

Cambridge when the Spanish show started. You didn't happen to know him, eh, Hall?"

Hall studied the photograph.

"He fought with the British Battalion," Fielding offered.

"I was with them in the fighting for Sierra Pedigrosa," Hall said. "There was Pete Kerrigan, and a boy named Patterson I knew pretty well. And—but that was after the Jarama fighting."

"The boy is not alive," Fielding said. "I checked with the International Red Cross after the war, and he was not taken prisoner by the fascists. I just wanted to find someone who could tell me—who could tell me how my boy died."

Hall returned the red-leather frame. "I wish from the bottom of my heart I could help you. But I just can't. I'm afraid I never did meet the boy."

Roger Fielding read the letter from London for perhaps the thousandth time, sighed, and placed it face down on top of the pile to the left of the letters and reports in the folder. "Ah, well," he said. "Now for the living. Now here's a report I made three weeks ago. Some day those young stuffed shirts in the Embassy will have to read my reports seriously, Hall. Perhaps this is the report that will do it."

The second report bore the heading: "Neutrality or Belligerence: Gamburdo or Tabio."

Hall started. "What's this?" he asked.

"Let's look it over, old man." Fielding cleared his throat and began to read aloud.

"It is no secret, or it should be no secret to our vigilant intelligence services, that President Anibal Tabio is a warm friend of the cause for which the United Nations are fighting. It is no secret that Tabio, before being stricken with his present tragic illness, was planning to go before the Havana Conference himself to lead the continental campaign to declare war on the Axis powers.

"However, the views of Vice-President Gamburdo, who now has assumed the control of the government, are less well known. Gamburdo's views, however, are not among the best kept secrets of this war." Fielding chuckled, waved his pipe in the direction of the Presidencia, and added the comment, "I should say not! They are far from secret.

"Gamburdo's ties to the Cross and the Sword are very discreet. I have reason to believe that Gamburdo believes his link with the ATN is not known by anyone except a few chosen fascist leaders."

Fielding looked up at Hall. "Oho," he laughed. "That must have been hard to swallow. They don't like to call the Cross-and-Sword bandits 'fascists.' Oh, no. Not the Embassy. They've got them tabbed as 'conservatives' opposed to the extremes of the Red Tabio regime. The fools!

"Well, now, to continue. Ah—chosen fascist leaders. Oh, yes. But twice within the past two weeks, for three hours on the twelfth and for a full day on the fourteenth, Gamburdo was at the ranch of his brother Salvador in Bocas del Sur conferring with Cross and Sword leaders Jorge Davila, Segundo Vardenio, Carlos Antonio Montes, and José Ignacio del Llano. The second meeting was also attended by Ramos, the Spanish Consul General in San Hermano."

"Ramos," Hall commented. "I know something about him. Two years ago Batista gave him twelve hours to get the hell out of Cuba before the

diplomatic courtesies were forgotten and a cot reserved for Ramos in the concentration camp for Axis nationals on the Isle of Pines."

"He did come to San Hermano from Havana," Fielding said. "So I'm not so crazy after all."

"You're not crazy at all."

"Hello!" Fielding exclaimed. "If you know that Ramos was kicked out, then the Embassy crowd must know it too. Now I begin to see why Commander New has invited me to have dinner at the Embassy tomorrow." He took a deep breath, straightened his tie with elaborate mock ceremony. "Mr. Hall," he said, speaking like an announcer at a royal court, "I have the pleasure of informing you that Roger Fielding, Esquire, is about to be released from the insane asylum to which His Majesty's Ambassador consigned him in September, 1938."

Hall laughed and helped himself to another pipeful of Fielding's tobacco. "Let's finish this report," he said. "I can't tell you how important it is to me."

"Here you are, old man." Fielding handed the report to Hall. "I was reading them aloud to keep you from falling asleep. But I think you're wide awake now."

Hall smiled warmly at the old man and read the rest of the report. It was very brief. It described how Gamburdo had shifted nearly the entire customs staff at San Hermano to other ports or to desk jobs on land, and replaced them with new customs men who were in many cases proven members of the Falange or the ATN or both. This move, the report stated, opened the gates to Axis arsonists assigned to cross the seas on Spanish liners.

"Cross and Sword members," the report concluded, "are in certain exclusive bars openly boasting that when Tabio passes away, Gamburdo will declare

the nation a neutral in this war. His family has been sending copper, hides, beef, coffee, and sugar only to Spanish firms since 1940. It is an open secret in the Lonja de Comercio that these shipments do not remain in Spain but are immediately trans-shipped to Germany. None of the Spanish firms with which the Gamburdo family does business were in existence before July 18, 1936, the day the Spanish War started. They are all known in shipping and export circles as German enterprises. Gamburdo's brother has twice been heard to boast, while in his cups, that the Nazis are protecting his vast holdings in France.

"The Cross and Sword members in San Hermano business circles speak highly of Gamburdo and to a man they assert that if Tabio dies, Gamburdo will impose a foreign policy which in the name of neutrality will bring prosperity to the landowners and exporters. It will also, of course, bring vitally needed war supplies from this country to the Axis powers; a fact they don't even bother to deny."

Hall was puzzled by the report's lack of information on Gamburdo's link to the Falange during the Spanish War. He remembered that picture of Gamburdo at the Falange dinner held in San Hermano in 1936, the picture he had seen in the files of the secret police in Havana. "How much do you have on Gamburdo?" he asked.

"Gamburdo?" Fielding yawned twice, stretched his arms. "Not as much as I would like to have, Hall."

"Oh." Hall told him about the picture.

"I'm not surprised," Fielding said. "But it's really news to me. What do you know that I should know?"

"Nothing much, I'm afraid. How about this doctor who arrived on my plane, Varela Ansaldo?"

"He's never been in San Hermano before."

"Who sent for him?"

"I don't know. *El Imparcial* has been giving Gamburdo the credit."

"What do you think of that?"

"I don't know, Hall. I think they might be trying to give Gamburdo credit for something he doesn't deserve. *El Imparcial* is very much pro-Gamburdo, you know."

"Don't I know it! I used to see Fernandez in his Falange uniform in San Sebastian."

"He's no good."

"Do you think his paper can be right about Ansaldo? I mean about his being brought to San Hermano by Gamburdo."

"Possibly I can find out."

"What do you think, Fielding? What's your hunch?"

"I have none, old man. But I can see that you have, and I can see what it is. You think *El Imparcial* might for once be telling the truth."

"Not the whole truth. I saw *El Imparcial*, too. It also said that Varela Ansaldo was brought to San Hermano to *cure* Tabio."

Fielding cocked his head, looked at Hall out of one eye. "And you think Ansaldo was brought in to kill Professor Tabio?"

"I don't know. I just don't know."

"But you mean to find out?"

"*Quién sabe?*"

"I'll help you. I'll give you all the help I can."

"But you think I'm nuts?"

The Englishman hesitated for a long while. "Ah ... Frankly, old man—well, damn it all, you could be wrong. But I'd never say you were—*nuts* I believe is the word you used."

"Thanks."

"Well, sir, it's been a busy day." Fielding put the letters back in the folder, then shoved the folder into the portfolio and tied the strings. "Unless I hear a motion to the contrary, I shall make a move to adjourn. Ah, the delegate from North America bows. The Ayes have it. Session is adjourned."

He rose from the desk, put the portfolio back in the filing cabinet, closed the drawer and tested the lock. "Suppose we meet again after I have my dinner with Commander New at the Embassy tomorrow night. He's our new Intelligence man. Understand he took quite a beating from the Hun at Dunkirk."

"Swell. Same place?"

"I don't know yet, old man. Suppose I give you a ring." The Englishman suddenly lapsed into a lisping, Castillian Spanish. "Señor Hall? Eh, Señor Hall? This is Father Arupe. Bless you, my son. Would you care to come to confession tonight?"

"Then it will be Father Arupe on the phone?"

"Yes, Señor. If I ask you to confession, it means this office in an hour. If I suggest you attend mass in the morning, drive out to my house. I'll write the address for you."

"Good."

"Oh, just another word about tonight's reports. If you could help me bring the facts about the waterfront to your government, I think it would be most beneficial. Most beneficial, old man."

"I'll do my best."

"I know I can count on you. Knew it before I ever laid eyes on you, Hall. One of my associates can keep us both posted on the waterfront. Name's Harrington. Grand chap, Harrington. Straight as a die, and intelligent."

Hall poured a cup full of cold coffee and swallowed it in a gulp. "God, that's good coffee," he said.

"How are you going back to the Bolivar?"

"I've got a car waiting downstairs. The driver insisted upon waiting."

"El Gran Pepe?"

"Yeah. I guess it is Big Joe." He described his driver. "And Souza says he is very reliable."

"Oh, he is, old man. He is. You know, since they turned the bloody lights down, it's worth your life to cross the streets at night. Awful lot of traffic accidents and all that, you know. Nothing like a reliable driver."

"How about you, Fielding?"

"Oh, I'll phone for my own reliable driver. Or better yet, tell Pepe to come back for me, will you, old man?"

Hall rubbed the right side of his face. "Why don't you ride back with me, and then continue on out to your house?"

"No. It would be better if you left here alone."

"But how about you?"

"There's no danger, old man. No danger. Besides ..." Fielding reached into his jacket pocket, took out a small black automatic. "She's loaded, and I can shoot in the dark, if need be. My Betsy is all I need."

"This is silly," Hall protested.

"Go on, now, old man. No one is going to break in to the office at this hour of the night. I'm in no danger at all."

"If you say so." Hall got up. "Don't see me to the door. I know my way."

The old man put his arm around Hall's shoulder. "We English," he said, "we're an undemonstrative tribe. Take pride in our cold hearts. But underneath the ice some of us have hearts. I'm glad to know you, Hall. And I'm glad we had this little chat. Good night, and sleep well. You're all in."

"Good night, Fielding. And thanks. You're swell."

Hall left the office, rode the elevator to the main floor. Outside, the reliable driver was asleep at the wheel, his right hand under the white chauffeur's cap which rested on his lap. Hall stood near the open window, smiling sardonically at Big Pepe. O.K., pal, he thought, we'll find out about you right now. He cleared his throat, suddenly barked, "Arriba España!"

Big Pepe awoke with a startled growl. The hand under the cap swung up toward the window. It was clenched around a large nickeled revolver.

"It's me, Pepe," Hall laughed. "Hall."

The driver groaned, shoved the pistol into his trouser-pocket. Then he also laughed. "Get in," he said. "Get in and thank your stars you're still alive."

Hall joined him in the front seat.

"Arriba España," Pepe muttered, starting the car. "That is no joke in the heart of any Delgado from the Asturias. That is an abomination."

"You're an Asturiano?"

"Look at me, *compañero*. Do I have the face of a Gallego? Do I have the head of a Catalan? Do I have the eyes of a Madrileño or the soul of a *puta*?"

"You fought in the war against the fascists?"

"Mother of God, he's asking me if I fought! Always until eternity they will ask, Delgado, did you fight? And what will I say?"

"Watch out!" Hall screamed. "You'll hit that pole!" He grabbed for the wheel. Big Pepe's steel arm stopped him.

"*De nada*," the driver laughed. "Didn't Fernando tell you I am a reliable driver?" The car missed the pole by inches, whirled around a corner on two wheels, and then rolled casually down the Avenida de la Liberacion. Another mad turn, and they were at the Bolivar.

"The Englishman, Fielding," Hall said. "He wants you to pick him up at the office and take him home."

"*Bueno.*" Big Pepe put the car in gear.

"How much do I owe you?" Hall shouted.

"*Mañana, compañero, mañana.*" Big Pepe had to stick his head out of the window and look back, while the car moved ahead, to answer Hall. One more *mañana*, the American thought, and the reliable driver would drive his car through a wall. He watched the car turn the corner on two wheels.

Souza was still on duty. He handed Hall the key to his room. "You look very tired, Señor Hall," he said. "I hope you sleep well."

"Thank you. Good night, *amigo*." When he got to his room, he phoned down to the desk.

"I forgot," he said. "But if that *cabrón* of a waiter is still on duty, could you send up a bottle of mineral water with the elevator operator?"

"Of course. The operator is no *cabrón*."

"Thanks. And by the way, didn't I meet you the last time I was in San Hermano?"

"No, Señor. But if you will pardon me for presuming, I feel in a sense as if we are old friends, in a sense."

"Old friends?"

"Yes, Señor. You see, I have read your book."

"My book?"

"*Sí, su libro. Buenas noches, compañero.*"

This time there was no confusion in Hall's mind. He knew which book Fernando Souza meant. He went to sleep feeling less lonely than he had in a long time.

Chapter four

The alarm in the pigskin traveling clock Bird had given Hall as a going-away gift went on at eight. Hall shut it off, glanced at the radium dial, and got out of bed. On the roof tops of the houses in old San Hermano roosters were crowing. Outside, trolley bells clanged a block away from the Bolivar. Hall took the half-emptied bottle of carbonated water into the bathroom, poured it over his toothbrush, sprinkled the wet brush with powder, and scrubbed his teeth. The charged water filled his mouth with a vigorous foam. He rinsed his mouth with the rest of the soda, bathed, shaved and dressed.

There was nothing in his box at the desk. He handed the day clerk the key and walked out to the street. At a little hole-in-the-wall stand on Virtudes Street he bought a glass of mouth-puckering tamarind juice. A few steps down the narrow street there was a newsstand. Hall bought two morning papers, found a café where he had a cup of coffee with hot milk and a toasted roll. He remained at his table in the soft morning sun, reading the papers and smoking a cigar, until nearly ten o'clock.

According to both papers, Ansaldo and Marina were to make a preliminary examination of Tabio, and would then spend the rest of the day consulting with San Hermano physicians who were attending the President. There was no hint of what was actually wrong with the President, simply a repetition of the old statement that Tabio's condition was still grave.

Jerry was on time for their breakfast appointment. She was wearing a bright yellow suit of very thin cloth. "Hello," she said. "Still want to be a tourist guide?"

"More than ever." He caught himself wishing that this could be just an ordinary date with a girl.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"Why?"

"You're scowling."

"Sorry. My mind must have wandered. I'd never scowl at you."

She smiled at him. "Thanks," she said. "I thought for a moment that I'd pulled a boner. The suit isn't too loud, is it?"

It was his turn to smile. "God, no," he laughed. "It's perfect. Very hungry? Good. We're eating right here in the hotel."

They took a table near a potted orange tree.

"How do you say ham and eggs in Spanish?" she asked.

"*Jamón y huevos.* Want some?"

"Uh huh. But I want to order them myself."

"O.K. Order some for me, too." Hall hissed for the waiter.

"What's the idea of razzing the guy?"

"Relax, that's the way you call a waiter."

Jerry smiled at the waiter when he reached their table. With a childish directness, she pointed first at Hall and then to herself. "*Jamón y huevos*," she said.

"That is all the Spanish the señorita speaks," Hall explained. "I think we will have toast and coffee, too."

"Well, well," the waiter said in accented English. "The lady speaks good, no?"

"No," Jerry laughed.

"Well, well," the waiter said, "today is very nice and sunny. Very nice." He walked into the kitchen.

"I have a perfect itinerary," Hall said. "Old San Hermano first; that's the historic colonial part of the city. Then, at noon, we take the funicular railway to the top of the world for lunch. And after that—well, well, well, as the waiter said."

They walked about San Hermano all morning. Hall showed her through the old fortress of the Duke of La Runa, which the government had restored after Segura was overthrown, told her about the early colonial history of the city. They sat on the old sea wall for a few minutes, while Hall pointed out the Moorish and Spanish details of the stone houses along the sea drive above the wharves. The youngest of the houses was a century old; the tile friezes along their bellies had all been imported from Spain in sailing ships. Jerry watched the sun do magic tricks of blue and purple on the surface of the houses. They wandered through the old market places, deserted that day, but colored by the little stalls along the sidewalks. Hall bought a large spray of gardenias for the girl from an itinerant vendor.

"Where are those beaten-silver things you told me about?" she asked.

"Later," he said. "There's plenty of time for that."

"Where do we go now?" Jerry asked. "My feet are killing me."

"From now on we ride." He found a taxi parked near the Cathedral, and they rode to the funicular railway terminal at the base of Monte Azul. He told her how the railway was built by Segura, as they rode. "But it was

when the Tabio junta threw the Seguristas out that the damned cable cars meant anything to the people of the country themselves. You see, Jerry, Segura gave the concession on top of the mountain to one of his thugs. The new regime opened it up to the little guys. And wait till you see what they did to the grounds."

They shared the cable car with an old water colorist, and two other young couples. "My God," Jerry exclaimed, when she saw the route the cars followed, "it's like climbing hand over hand up a sheer cliff!"

"Don't worry. It's perfectly safe. In a way, though, I'm sorry this is such a clear day. On a cloudy day, the tracks just vanish into the soup up there, and you feel that you are being towed into the clouds."

The cars climbed for five miles, creaking, whining, grunting, but steadily pushing on toward the peak. From the opened windows, Jerry could see the Moorish villas at the base of the mountain, then their red-tiled roofs, then the miles of scraggly wild orange trees. The sweet, heavy odors of their blossoms filled the car.

"Oh, look," she said, "the town is getting smaller. And the sea is growing bluer."

"Wait until we get off," he smiled. "Then you'll really see something."

The old artist took out a sketch pad, studied Jerry's excited face, and made some quick strokes with a charcoal stick. Hall winked at the old man. "*Hola, viejo. Qué pasa?*"

"*La mujer es muy bonita.*"

"*Muchas gracias,* Señor. *Es verdad.*"

"What are you saying to him?" Jerry asked.

"He said you are very beautiful and I said that's the Lord's gospel truth. He's sketching you, I think."

"Can we buy it if it's good?"

"I'll speak to him later. Up there."

The car stopped at the terminal on the man-made plateau about a thousand feet from the actual tip of Monte Azul. A wooden rail ran along the edge of the plateau for about a quarter of a mile. Within the rail was the funicular terminal, a souvenir stand, a tiny post office, and a large open-air restaurant.

"Let's eat," Hall said. "You get hungry as a horse up there."

They took a table with an enameled orange top near the rail. Large barbecue pits hugged the mountain side of the restaurant, and under a shed roof three cooks presided over a row of steaming pots. From their table, they could see the mile-deep belt of mountain flowers which had been planted in the days of the dictators and expanded by the democrats. There were flowers of every shape and color, but orange was the color which spoke most frequently in the cultivated beds. Below the flowers, the mountainside seemed to be daubed with various shades of green and brown. "But usually," Hall said, "the mountain is blue. Almost as blue as the sea."

Jerry looked down at the sea. "I've never seen such a deep blue," she said.

"I know. This is the bluest water in the world." He hissed for a waiter. "I'm going to order a hell of a meal, young lady. A side of barbecued beef and some corn cakes the like of which you never tasted and—just trust my judgment."

"Can we get drinks here?"

"They have a white wine that beats anything in France."

The food was good and the wine was potent. When they were done eating, Jerry wanted more wine. "No more wine," Hall smiled. "Nibble on this cheese, and while you're nibbling I'm going to order a punch I've just composed in honor of this day. Let's call it Punch *Para Las Mujeres Bonitas*."

"Whatever that means," Jerry said, dreamily.

"Oh, it's wonderful. Black rum and passion-flower juice and tamarinda and wild cherry juice and—just wait. I'll be right back." He walked across the plateau to the outdoor bar and had a long discussion with the attendants.

Jerry was staring into the sea when he returned. "You know?" she sighed.

"What?"

"Nothing. I was just thinking that I've been looking at the sea and not thinking at all."

"Cigarette?"

"Uh huh. Thanks for taking me up here. It reminds me of something nice, but I can't think of what."

"I know," Hall said. "The minute you get here for the first time you feel as if you've known this place all your life."

The waiter brought a pitcher of scarlet punch and two tall glasses to the table. Hall paid the check, and added a package of American cigarettes to his tip.

He filled the two glasses, tried a sip from his before handing one glass to the girl. "Let's see how this strikes you," he smiled.

"It's delicious!"

"Finish it and then try walking," Hall said, dryly.

"We'll try walking later." They finished the punch in the pitcher, and then Jerry looked at her face in a pocket mirror.

"Oh, Mr. Hall," she sighed. "It ate away what was left of my lipstick and I think it gave me a red nose and I suppose I should powder and paint but I won't."

"Madam," he said, "you are under the influence."

"I may be high, sir, but I'm not drunk."

Hall got up and took her arm. "Shame on you, nurse," he said. "There's still a thousand sights to see up here."

"Lead on," she commanded. "We'll see who's potted."

Hall pointed to the edge of the restaurant. There was a mountain path at that end, a graveled path leading into a park of streams and cypresses. They followed this path until the forest closed in around them, and they were alone.

"My feet," Jerry said. "These shoes were not meant for serious mountain climbing."

"My lady." Hall spread his brown gabardine jacket in the moss bank adjacent to a small stream. She took off her shoes and stretched out on the jacket, her hands clasped under her head.

"You know," she said, "if I weren't so full of food I'd take my stockings off and dip my feet in the creek. I just haven't the strength to move."

Hall lit a cigarette, put it in the girl's mouth. "If you ever dipped one of your dainty gringo toes in this burbling frigidaire," he said, "they'd hear your

screams twelve miles out at sea."

Jerry sat up and hummed the tune of "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf." She took off her stockings, started to edge down toward the stream. "Here, help me up." She extended a hand to Hall, who pulled her to her feet. "I'm going wading."

There was no scream when Jerry stepped into the water. Her breath just stopped. She yanked her foot out of the stream as if it were a blazing inferno, hopped around on the dry foot with tears in her eyes, and then lay down on the jacket.

"Well, anyway," she said, when she could catch her breath, "I didn't scream."

"No. You were brave." He took out a large handkerchief, started to rub the foot which had been in the water.

"I never thought I'd wind up here when I left New York," she said.

"When do you go to work?"

"Tomorrow, I guess. The President is a pretty sick patient."

"Does Ansaldo think he can pull him through?"

"He didn't say."

"Did he find out what's the matter with Tabio?"

"Not yet. That's what he's doing today."

Hall wanted to ask her further questions about Ansaldo, but he was afraid to betray his interest too openly. "Let's cut it out," he laughed. "This is a party, and we're talking shop."

The girl sighed in contentment. "Oh, that's nice," she murmured. "I don't care what we talk about, as long as we stay here."

"Like it here?"

"Right now, I wish I could stay here forever." She had her hands clasped under her head, was talking to the tips of the cypresses as well as to Hall.

"Why don't you?"

"It's like Shangri-La," she said. "We should both be two centuries old. How old are you, Hall?"

"Thirty-six."

"I'm twenty-eight. Honest. Not twenty-one. Twenty-eight. In two years I'll be over the borderline. Then I'll be an old lady. But right now I'm not going to lie about my age."

"Right now I don't think you could tell a lie. Not even a white lie."

"No fair, Hall. First you get me drunk—only I'm not high any more—then you take me to Shangri-La. Can I call you Matthew? Or is it Matty or Matt the women in your life call you?"

"My friends call me Matt."

"My friends! There's no Mrs. Matt?"

"No. Never has been."

"I had a husband, once. Only I divorced him and became a nurse."

"That when you left Ohio? Or was it Indiana?"

Jerry turned her eyes from the cypresses and looked at Hall, who sat at her side, his face over hers. "Ohio," she said. "How did you know?"

Hall bent over and kissed her lightly on the lips. She neither resisted nor returned his kiss. "You sweet dope," he said. "I'm a Buckeye myself. Cleveland."

"I'm from Columbus."

"Pleased to know you, Miss Columbus. Did you know you have green eyes and there are little gold stars in each eye?"

"Nope."

"Nope. Sweet dope. No one ever told you."

"He calls me names!" Jerry sat up and put her arms around Hall's neck. "He calls me names." She put her slightly opened mouth against his lips and pulled him closer, and together they sank to the ground. They lay locked in the one kiss, the girl's full breasts pressing against Hall's chest.

"Don't," she whispered, "please. Ah, don't. Ah, Matt. Darling."

He found her lips again. They were trembling, and he could feel the tremors which started in the pit of her stomach and rose to her shoulders. "Please, Matt," she broke from his grip and turned her face to the ground. "Darling," she said, biting then kissing his hand. He put his arm around her and kissed the back of her neck. She shuddered deliciously. "Let's get up," she said.

"We're alone here," he said.

She smiled and kissed his hand. "I'm getting up," she said. "Let me sit up, Matt."

"Sure," he said. He sat up with her. She ran her hand lightly over his face, brushing the scars, the flatness of his nose.

"Gorilla," she said, and she kissed him softly on the mouth. "You tore off one of my buttons, you ape."

"Hello, Miss Columbus," he said, speaking with a Spanish accent. "It is a very nice day today. Very sunny."

"Yes," she said.

"Still want to stay here forever?"

"Uh huh. Do I look too messy?"

"No. Your hair could stand some combing."

"Will you get me some more of that punch?"

When she had combed her hair, they stood up and he took her hand and they walked back along the graveled path.

"Can we phone to town from here?" she asked. "Doctor wanted me to check in at about five."

"Going to work?"

"Don't know yet."

They had their punch. The light danced in Jerry's hair, gave it the same orange tint which dominated the flower beds. "I forgot to tell you," Hall said. "You're beautiful."

Jerry swirled the scarlet drops on the bottom of her glass. "You don't know a thing about me," she said.

"What should I know?"

"Nothing. But can I tell you, anyway? I want to, Matt."

"I want to know."

Jerry sighed. "I told you I was married before, didn't I? It didn't take."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I'm not really from Columbus. That is, my home town is nearer Columbus than to any other city, but it's just a hick village in the sticks." She told her story in very few words. High school, and then three years at the State University, and then marriage to a small-town high-school principal some years older than herself. After five years of small-town married life, Jerry came into a small inheritance, left the schoolmaster, and went back to get her degree. "I wanted to study medicine," she said, "but I didn't have enough money, so I took up nursing instead. The idea was to earn enough as a nurse to go back to medical school."

"What happened?"

"New York happened. I couldn't take hospital regimentation, and some of the doctors were so anxious to sleep with me that they got me some snap jobs. You know, sitting up with rich lushes and hanging onto the girdles of deserted dowagers who wanted to jump out of windows and handing the right scalpel to society surgeons while they carved out a million-dollar gut."

"It must have paid well."

"Too well."

"And so you became a glamour girl."

"That's a pretty cruel way to put it, Matt. I'm not really a dope, you know."

"I know."

"I guess I just stopped thinking because I was afraid to think."

"Where does Ansaldo fit into the picture?"

"I came with him because I admire his skill as a doctor. I can learn things by working with him. He's fantastically good, Matt."

"How long do you know him?"

"Not long. He came to New York about six months ago to operate on a drunk who'd been my patient for months. The patient had fallen down a flight of stairs on my day off. Ansaldo invited me to be one of the nurses when he operated on the patient's spine. Are you interested in operations?"

"A little. Why?"

"It was amazing. I thought I had seen some good surgeons at work. But Ansaldo is more than good, Matt. He's great. After that first operation, I was his nurse for all of his New York operations. And naturally, I jumped at the chance to come along. I'm a perfectionist, Matt. Some day, some day soon I hope, I'm going to go back to medical school. I've been saving every spare penny I could. And what I'm learning from Ansaldo couldn't be taught in any school."

"You amaze me," he said, honestly. It was hard to doubt her. He prodded her for details of Ansaldo's skill. She answered him earnestly, and with increased enthusiasm.

"But wait," she protested, finally. "I don't see why I should be telling all about myself. I haven't talked like this to any man for years."

"I haven't listened like this for just as long," he laughed.

"But it's not good, I know," she said, her voice abruptly breaking. There were tears in her eyes, and she turned away. "I've gone and made a fool of myself."

"Why?"

"I know," she said. "You probably have a wife and nine kids in New York. I bet you carry their pictures in your wallet."

"Do I?" Hall handed his wallet to Jerry. "Look for yourself. Take out every picture."

There were three photos in all. The first was of Bird, his wife and their baby. "My publisher," he explained.

There was a sepia photo of Hall pointing the lens of a camera at a bomb crater in Madrid. "London?" Jerry asked.

"Yeah," he said. "London."

The remaining photo showed Hall talking to an aged couple on a road packed with refugees. "France?" Jerry asked.

Hall shook his head. "No. Belgium." Again he lied. The picture had been taken in Spain.

"Don't hurt me, Matt," the girl said. She was dry-eyed now, but saddened. "Don't hurt me later."

"I won't hurt you," he said. He wondered at that moment if he would be able to avoid hurting her.

"Are you really alone?"

"Alone?" He did not laugh. "God! I'm the loneliest sonofabitch in the whole world."

The girl smiled again. "I have half a mind to believe you," she said. "Shall we get started back?"

"O.K. It's getting late. Have dinner with me?"

"I don't know, yet. Would you call the hotel and ask if there are any messages for me?"

"There's a phone in the souvenir stand."

The girl bought a batch of picture sets while Hall was on the phone. "Do we eat?" she asked when he came out of the booth.

"No. They want you in the Marti Memorial Lab at the University at seven."

"Shucks."

"I phoned for a driver to meet us at the bottom in twenty minutes. We still have time for a drive around the nicer parts of New San Hermano."

They went to the terminal to wait for their car. The ticket agent glanced at Jerry and then he reached under his counter and brought up a large envelope. "Señor," he said, "the painter left this for the lady." It was the sketch of Jerry, wide-eyed and happy as the car climbed Monte Azul. In the lower right-hand corner was an inscription Hall translated for her. "To a charming visitor—a memento of her visit to our free city. Horacio."

"It was sweet of the old man," Jerry said. "Tell the guy to thank him for me, will you?"

"I already did. But this is fantastic. An original Horacio water color is worth a baby fortune. This sketch is valuable, Jerry."

"Didn't you recognize him?"

"Never saw him before in my life."

Big Pepe was waiting for them with his LaSalle when they reached the bottom of Monte Azul. "How good are you with tourists?" Hall asked. "I

want to show the señorita New San Hermano."

"I can drive you with my eyes closed," Pepe said.

Hall laughed. "Keep your eyes open. And your four wheels on the pavement," he said. "Or I'll kill you with your own gun."

"I have no fears of you," Pepe said. "Get in."

Hall held onto Jerry's hand as he described the sights that rolled by their window. Big Pepe handled the car like a model tourists' chauffeur. It rolled along smoothly, not too quickly, and when Hall tapped him on the shoulder he would stop, the motor running softly while Hall made his explanations to Jerry.

At six, Hall and Jerry agreed to have one last drink before parting for the night. "Let's ask the driver, too," he suggested. "He's a nice guy."

"Sure. So are you."

"Pepe, how about joining us for a drink at that bar near the Libro del Mundo?"

Pepe turned around and grinned at them. "With many thanks," he said. "I will join you."

"If we don't all join our ancestors first. Watch the road, you Asturian murderer!"

"I take it," Jerry laughed, "you were telling him to keep his eyes on the wheel."

"You're learning the language, *muchachita*."

They found an empty table on the sidewalk. Hall and Jerry had Scotch and sodas. Big Pepe ordered coffee. He was very happy to be with them. He

beamed continuously at the girl, and to Hall he swore that never had he seen a more magnificent woman. "Of course," he purred, "she could stand more meat, but for a gringo, she is most magnificent."

"He says you're a sight for sore eyes," Hall translated.

"Then tell him to look at my face."

"The woman thanks you," Hall said.

Jerry pointed to the bar. "There's the little Dutchman," she said.

Androtten was standing alone at the bar, a wine glass in his hand.

"I'll call him over. He's a lonesome bastard too."

The Dutchman was delighted to see Hall. "This is indeed a damn surprise," he said. "Join you at the table? Happy as hell to join you, Mr. Hall. Ah, the nurse of the great doctor. Tell me, nurse, do you think the doctor could cure my rheumatism?" This, he made clear by his gesture of holding his side in mock agony and groaning, was meant to be a joke.

Hall translated the joke for Pepe.

The driver nodded. "I understood most of it," he admitted. "One doesn't drive American tourists for a century and learn nothing."

"Aha," Hall said. "Pepe knows a few words of English, it develops."

Jerry turned to the driver, smiled sweetly at him. "Tell me," she said, "did you ever have your eyes scratched out?"

Pepe grinned, shrugged his huge shoulders. "Did the señorita say I have nice eyes?" he asked Hall.

"No, Pepe. She said your eyes can bring you trouble."

The Asturiano closed his eyes and drew his finger across his throat, making the appropriate sounds. "I understand perfectly," he said.

"Let's sit down one of these days," Androtten said to Hall. "I am willing as hell to give you the damn story of what the Japanese did to me in Java, if you are still damn willing to listen."

"Oh, I am. Anxious as hell, Mr. Androtten." He explained to Big Pepe what had happened to the little man. Pepe's face instantly reflected his deep sorrow.

"I hate to break up this nice party," Jerry said, "but I have to go to work."

"Can we take you back to the Bolivar, Mr. Androtten?"

"Not just yet. I have a damn appointment here at seven."

Hall put some money on the table and followed Jerry to the car. "I forgot to tell you," he said. "There'll be a government car waiting to pick you up at ten to seven."

"The poor man," Pepe sighed. "The cruel Japanese!"

"It's been a wonderful day, Matt."

"When do we repeat it?"

"Can't tell. I'll leave a message for you tonight when I get back."

Hall ate alone after Jerry went to the laboratory, and then wandered around the dark streets of the waterfront, thinking how he could organize his work. That was the damned job, always. Planning your moves. Deciding exactly what it is you're after and then organizing a method of getting it. The letter to Santiago. That was a good start. With luck, there would be an answer in a

week. But was a week too far away? How sick was Tabio, and could he hold out for another week? And anyway, was Ansaldo a fascist?

The face of Varela Ansaldo would not leave Hall's mind. Maybe Fielding could find out something, anything. At this moment, Fielding was probably eating a little crow with his dinner at the British Embassy. But would they tell Fielding anything? Did they know anything? And who the hell was Fielding and how in hell did he get the dope in his reports? *No, my fine impertinent friend, I am not a British agent.* He was the father of Sergeant Harold Fielding who hopped out of the wicker pony cart and picked up one of those thin rifles and died at Jarama.

Santiago's answer. There was the best bet. If the boys in Havana had no dope, at least they would tell him who to contact in San Hermano, and it was a safe bet that when Pedro de Aragon (or would it be a love letter from Maria de Aragon?) wrote, the letter would lead him to someone who would know Souza and Pepe Delgado. They were O.K., but just a little cautious, and this business of squiring Ansaldo's nurse would not set too well with them unless Ansaldo was not Gamburdo's man at all.

Hall was turning a corner when he first noticed the little man walking in the shadows of the opposite sidewalk. A little man in a black suit and a dirty stiff straw hat. Hall slowed his steps, waited for the man in the straw hat to walk closer to the yellowed street light. The man slowed down, too. Hall kept walking. He headed for an avenue, found a cab, told the driver to take him to La Perrichola. He looked around to see the little man get into the other cab at the stand.

"I changed my mind," Hall told the driver. "Take me to the Ritz instead."

He walked slowly into the lobby of the Ritz. It was one of the more modern hotels in New San Hermano. He found a phone booth and called Souza. "Where's Pepe?" he asked.

"Right outside. Do you need him?"

"Very much. Tell him to pick me up near the back entrance of the Ritz. I'm too drunk to trust a strange driver."

Souza laughed. "You Americans," he said. "Pepe will be there in five minutes."

Hall went to the bar, had a short brandy. The little man was sitting behind a potted palm near the street doorway, his face buried in a magazine. Hall looked at his watch and walked to the elevator. "Sixth floor," he said.

He walked through the sixth-floor hall, took the back stairs to the fourth floor, and then looked out of the window at the landing. Big Pepe's LaSalle was parked near the servants' door. Hall listened for the sound of footsteps on the stairs above him. Quietly, he walked to the basement, nodded at a waiter relaxing on a bench near the door, and walked slowly to the LaSalle.

"*Qué pasa?*"

"Trouble. Drive a few blocks down and then come back slowly toward the front of the hotel."

"Sit with me," Pepe said. He tapped the pistol in his pocket.

"No." Hall got down on the floor of the back part of the car. "And take your white hat off."

The car shot down three streets, then Pepe turned the corner, rode a block, and started to crawl along the street on which the main entrance of the Ritz opened. "Souza said you were in trouble," Pepe said. "He says you are not a *borracho*."

"I was followed. Watch for a little man in a black suit and a stiff straw hat. Park a block from the entrance to the Ritz and keep your motor running."

"*Claro.*"

"I think he tried to sell me perfume this afternoon when I was walking with that nurse."

"She needs no perfume," Pepe said.

"She is not my woman," Hall said.

"Did you see that other woman who came with the doctor?" Big Pepe snorted violently. "I hate *maricones*," he said.

"I hate them too, Pepe. Did you know that Franco is also a homosexual?"

"They are all *maricones*. Hitler, Franco. They are all the same."

"*Putas y maricones*," Hall said. "*La Nueva España!*"

Big Pepe cleared his throat and spat out of the window. "Arriba España." Hall could feel the low, toneless laugh in the Asturian's throat.

"I think I see your dog," Pepe said. He described him for Hall. "He acts as if he lost something."

"Me."

"Falangista?"

"I don't know. Ever seen him before?"

"Who knows? *Mira!*"

"I can't look. What's he doing?"

"Hiring a car."

"Follow him. But ..."

"*Mira, chico,* that I can do with my eyes closed. And he won't know me for the offal on the streets."

"Don't lose him."

"I'd sooner lose my *cojones*." He started the car, slowly. "I am magnificent at this," he said.

"Good."

"During the war I did this all the time."

"When he stops, watch where he goes but don't stop yourself. Keep going after he stops."

"Don't worry," Pepe said. "I am not new at this."

"Very good."

"That girl with the nice hair, *compañero*. Why don't you take her into your bed some night? I think she would be very good there."

"Forget the girl."

"That will be very hard."

"Where are we?"

"Still following the little dog. We're moving toward the Plaza."

"Pepe. The Englishman's son. Did you know him?"

"He was very young. I only saw him once. He was very brave, *compañero*. The Centro Asturiano sent flowers to his father when the boy was killed. He died for the Republic, you know." Pepe slowed the car.

"What's the matter?"

"He's stopping. We're on the Calle de Virtudes. He's going into a café. I'll keep going."

The car covered another block. Pepe turned the corner and stopped. "You can sit up now," he said.

Hall saw where he was. "Which bar did he go to?" he asked.

"El Siglo. There's another café next door. You can sit behind a hedge at a table there and watch El Siglo. I have done it many times. I'll park the car across the street and watch for you."

"Do you think we can do this alone?"

"Why not?"

"What do we have to do?"

"Who knows? It is the little dog's next move."

"But could you get some friends now?"

"Yes. How many?"

"A few. I'll keep an eye on El Siglo."

"All right," Pepe said. "But we shouldn't lose the little dog."

"That is a chance we must take. If we lose him tonight, we will follow him tomorrow. He will be in my footsteps again."

"That is true," Big Pepe said. "I will be back soon." He drove off down the back street.

Like El Siglo, the café where Hall found a table near a boxed hedge on the sidewalk faced the entrance to the apartments of the Presidencia. The lights

were on again in the fourth floor. Hall wondered if the doctors were poking poor Tabio at that moment.

He ordered a pot of coffee and sat back to watch the entrance to El Siglo. A newsboy sold him a late paper, but Hall gave up trying to read it after a few minutes. He bought a box of wax matches and some cigars, turning his back to El Siglo when the tip of his first match flared into flame.

Less than ten minutes after Hall started his vigil, the little man in the straw hat walked out of El Siglo and sat down behind the wheel of a Renault parked at the curb. He sat alone in the car, his face turned toward the Presidencia. Hall looked nervously up the street for a sign of Big Pepe. He jotted the license number of the Renault down on the margin of his newspaper.

There was still no sign of Big Pepe.

The man in the Renault pressed the squeaky rubber horn twice. Another man walked quickly out of El Siglo and got into the back seat of the Renault. Hall squirmed in his chair and looked vainly for Big Pepe. The passenger was Wilhelm Androtten.

Hall watched the Renault start to move up the Plaza. It rode around the entire Plaza, and, as it started to pass the cafés again, Hall saw that it was following a black limousine which had just left the Presidencia after picking up two passengers.

The black limousine was doing about thirty, picking its way out carefully in the half darkness of the old city. As it passed directly in front of Hall's table, one of the people sitting in the back seat lit a cigarette. In the light of the match, Hall could see that it was Varela Ansaldo.

He had to wait another ten minutes for Big Pepe, who returned with two young men. "We lost him, Pepe."

"*Hijo de puta!* I told you."

"Relax. I know who he works for. We can find them on our own terms now. I saw them."

"Who?"

Hall looked at the two young men sharing the front seat with Pepe. "Introduce me to your friends," he said.

Big Pepe grinned. "That is your right," he said. "This is my nephew Miguelito, and this is Juan Antonio Martinez. They're school teachers." The last he said with almost boastful pride.

The teachers were both slim lads in their early twenties. Hall shook their hands and got into the back of the car. "Let's drive out to the beach and talk," he said.

"No," Miguelito said. "It would not be wise. There are too many strangers there."

His colleague grunted. "Your pistol, Miguelito," he said. "Take it out of your pocket. It is digging a new hole in my arse."

"They talk that way all the time," Pepe said, tolerantly. "But they are very educated."

"I am sorry if I talk like a worker," Juan Antonio said to Pepe. "My father was only a miner. I apologize, Your Eminence."

"He is joking," Pepe said. "Miguelito, you are a Bachelor of Arts. Tell me, do workers joke, too?"

"Quiet, both of you," Miguelito said. "*Compañero* Hall will think we're all crazy."

Hall laughed. "I've seen boys like you before," he said.

"We were too young to go then," Juan Antonio said. "But if they try it here, the streets of San Hermano will run with blood before we let the fascists win."

"Juan Antonio is a Communist," Big Pepe said.

The boy did not deny it. "Remember my words," he said, "the flag of the Falange will never fly over San Hermano."

"Not if we are still alive," Miguelito added.

"Will you listen to these children?" Pepe asked. "As soon as you turn your back they put on the *pantalones* and make the noises of a man!"

"This little dog of a fascist who followed you," Miguelito said, "who is his superior?"

"I don't know, *compañeros*. It could be Hitler...."

"It could be Franco," Big Pepe said.

"He said that," Juan Antonio said. "He said Hitler, didn't he, Miguelito?"

"Quiet," Miguelito said. "This is no joke. You said you saw him with his superior?"

Hall smiled at the boy. "Listen, *chico*," he said, "men with more pistols than you have tried to put words in my mouth before. All they got from my mouth was my spit."

"*Olé!*" Juan Antonio punched Miguelito's shoulders with glee.

Souza was reading a fat book at his desk when Hall returned to the Bolivar. He greeted the boys with familiarity. "They are reliable," he said after they left.

"I know. I was sober when I called you before. But tonight your reliable boys nearly drank me under the table trying to find out who was with the little dog."

"The one who followed you to the Ritz?"

"The same one. They also told me that you are President of the Hotel Clerks Union."

"I am."

"Got a cigarette? Thanks. No, I've got matches." Hall looked around to see if he and Souza were alone. Quietly, he said, "Androtten was the man I saw with the little dog."

Souza's face grew grimmer. "I don't think I am surprised."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know. But I don't trust him."

"Maybe this will help you." Hall handed him the license number of the Renault. "It's the number of the car they used."

"It will help," Souza said.

"What time did Ansaldo get in?"

"He did not get in, yet. Why?"

"Androtten was following his car, I think."

"Androtten is out, too."

"Maybe we have something."

"You have a message in your box." It was a note from Jerry. She was going to work all day and had to attend a party at the American Embassy in the evening. But she would call him in the morning.

"I am watching her," Hall explained.

The trace of a smile flitted across the long face of the night clerk. "I know," he said. "Pepe told me."

"I'll kill him," Hall laughed. "I'm going to bed. Leave a note in my box about when they get in."

He went to his room. When he turned on the light, he saw that a note had been slipped under his door. It was from Jerry. "Thanks for a lovely day," it said. "I will call you before I leave for the lab."

Chapter five

He was dreaming of the crowds in the bull ring at Badajoz, but there were no bulls on the sand. It was the day of the massacre, the day when the Portuguese troops herded the *milicianos* and their families and handed them over to the waiting *franquistas* on the Spanish side of the border. It was the day the *franquistas* shoved the Republican families on to the sand of the bull ring at Badajoz and set up the heavy machine guns in the boxes and fired away until every human being on the field lay choking and dying in his own blood. In his dream Hall saw grand ladies in mantillas in the boxes that day tossing roses and perfumed kerchiefs to the animals at the machine guns, and in his dream he even knew that the perfume on the kerchiefs came from a certain shop in Barcelona.

Then Hall spotted a crowd of German and Spanish officers in another box and he leaped at them, his right hand gripping the ugly clasp knife in his pocket. There were nine officers in the box, four of them Nazis and one a gaudy Italian colonel and the rest were Spanish fascists in capes and one of them wore a Requete beret, although his cape carried the golden embroidered five arrows of the Falange. They began to flee from their box in a panic, but Hall managed to get a quick look at one of the Spaniards and then flung his knife at the Spaniard's retreating back. Then the bells began to toll in the churches and carabineros left their machine guns and ran barehanded after Hall but the clang of the bells started to blot everything out and the church bells of Badajoz blended into the steady drone of a smaller bell in Hall's ears and he awoke to the phone bell which had abruptly brought him back to San Hermano.

"Did I wake you up?" It was Jerry.

"Yeah. What time?"

"Stop groaning. Wash your face and I'll call you back in five minutes."

Later, she asked him if he had been having a bad dream and he said it had been closer to a nightmare in technicolor. "About the war?" she asked, and he said it had been about the war.

"Darling," she said, "I wish you never have another nightmare as long as you live."

"Thanks," he said. "Do we have breakfast together?"

"No. I'm leaving with the doctors in a few minutes. Work all day."

"Dinner tonight?"

"That's out, too. I have to go to a party with the doctors at the American Embassy."

"Good. I was invited, too. I'll see you there." There was a long pause at the girl's end of the wire, and Hall said, "Jerry? Are you still listening?"

"Sure," she said.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. You're a darling. I've got to hang up now. I've got to be out of here in ten minutes."

"O.K.," he said. "See you tonight."

He reached the lobby at half-past eight. There was no message in his box, and he could see that Jerry's key was already in the cubicle. "I'll be in the dining room if anyone phones," he told the day clerk. He bought a paper from a boy standing near the entrance of the Bolivar and went in to eat.

Hall was having his second cup of coffee when Androtten entered the dining room. The little Dutchman smiled happily when he spotted Hall.

"Good morning, good morning," he shouted. "Hell of a nice day, no?"

"It's nice and sunny," Hall said. "Eating alone? Take a chair."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Hall. Damn nice of you."

Hall wanted to shove the incongruous hells and damns down the pink face of the Hollander. "Not at all," he said. "I like company." But the beaming Dutchman brought goose pimples to his spine this morning.

"Excuse me," Hall said, rising. "I'll be back in a minute."

He went to the desk, picked up a pad of cable blanks and an indelible pencil. Then, at the table, he sat with pencil poised over the pad and smiled at Androtten. "Mine is a funny business," he said. "When you get to the capital of a country you can't go right to work, you know. Far from it, Androtten. First you smooch around the town like a prowler, talking to taxi drivers and bartenders and ..."

"Pardon my ignorance, Mr. Hall. But *smooch*? Is it a real word or journalists' slang?"

"I guess you'd call it slang. I mean you have to mingle with the little people to get an idea of the currents."

"And when you get this idea?"

"When you get the idea, you can go to work." Hall wrote the name and address of the editor of one of the big weeklies in the States on the blank. "Vice-President Gamburdo is man of hour here today," he wrote. "Tomorrow may be man of hour in all Latin America. Arranging for interview. Can you use? Matthew Hall."

"And now you are working?"

Hall turned the blank around so that Androtten could read the text of his cable. "I'll let you in on my secret," he laughed.

The Dutchman read the text. "Interesting," he said. "Damn interesting."

"I'm afraid it's just routine."

"Oh, never that." The Dutchman sighed. "When such vital personalities as Señor Gamburdo are routine to you, Mr. Hall, I imagine that my story has only a small chance of ever being told. But I suppose that is merely as it should be."

"Hell, no, Mr. Androtten. I'll tell you what we'll do. As soon as I have my interview with Gamburdo, we'll sit down and have our chat and then I'll query the *Saturday Evening Post* or *Collier's* and whatever they offer we'll split down the middle."

"You make me happy as hell, Mr. Hall. But please, money is no object. Please keep all of the money."

Hall shook his head. "We'll fight that out later," he said. "Cigar?"

Androtten demurred. His heart was not strong enough for cigars that early in the morning, he explained. "In Java I was healthier than an ox," he said. "But the damn Japanese ..." He let the rest of the sentence remain unspoken.

Through the open window of the dining room, Hall saw Pepe's LaSalle drive up to the Bolivar.

He excused himself with an "I'll be seeing you," and walked out to the desk. He handed the cable blank to the day clerk. "Send it press rate collect," he said.

Pepe had a message for Hall from Souza. Ansaldo had returned to the Bolivar at 3:14 A.M., twenty-three minutes before Wilhelm Androtten. They had both left calls to be awakened at eight in the morning.

"That all Souza said?"

"That is the complete message."

"Well, it's something, anyway." The papers said that Ansaldo was to spend the morning at the bedside of President Tabio.

"Where to?"

"Gobernacion Building. But not right away. Drive somewhere where we can have a coffee together. I'd like to talk to you first."

Pepe took him to a little workers' restaurant on the edges of the business section of New San Hermano. It was evident that he had had little sleep.

"Tired?" Hall asked.

The driver whistled, softly. "Like a corpse," he admitted.

An amused grimace distorted Hall's face. "What a corpse!" he said. "Why didn't you tell the boys who followed the teachers and me from the café last night to be better than the little dog?"

"You saw them?"

"I kept tripping over them all the way home."

Pepe thought it was very funny. "They pledged their lives to protect yours, the bunglers. Reliable, but clumsy."

"I am not angry," Hall said. "I am grateful."

"For nothing," Pepe protested.

"Pepe, do you know why I came to San Hermano?"

The big Asturian shrugged his shoulders. "You never told me, or Fernando. Miguelito and his friend said you have the mouth of a clam."

"Do you want to know why?"

"I never question friends. You are a friend."

Hall looked up at Pepe Delgado and wanted to tell him how much he reminded him of the best of the men he had met in Spain, the best of the officers and *milicianos* who never, even in the heat of battle, forgot the feelings and the sacred *dignidad* of their fellow men.

"Mother of God!" Pepe laughed. "Don't look at me as if I were that girl with the red hair."

"You are a good *compañero*," Hall said. "In a few days, perhaps I can tell you."

"I never ask questions of friends," Pepe said.

"I know. Did Souza tell you what I told him last night?"

"No. Only about when Ansaldo and Androtten came back."

"Can you reach Souza today?"

"Of course."

"Then listen. Tonight, he must find some excuse for moving me into the room next to Ansaldo—if there is such a room. Do you think he can do it?"

Pepe grabbed the check for the coffee, refused to relinquish it to Hall. "This is my table," he said with quiet dignity. He also refused to discuss his fee for driving Hall around San Hermano for days. "*Mañana*," he laughed. "But

about the room. I think Fernando can arrange it. The wife of the owner of the Bolivar is a member of the Centro Asturiano. She is also a first cousin of Dr. Gonzalez."

"I hope he can do it," Hall said.

"*Hola!*" Pepe boomed. "*Qué tal?*" He exchanged loud pleasantries with a chauffeur who came in and sat down at a table in the corner.

"A Gallego," he explained to Hall. "But otherwise a pretty decent man."

"There are many decent Gallegos," Hall said.

Pepe whistled through his teeth, shook the limp and dangling fingers of his right hand, and looked behind his back. Hall grinned. Pepe's gesture was as old as Spain.

"Listen, Pepe," he laughed, "we have much to do. And all in a very short time. I am going to see the Press Secretary in the Gobernacion. I am requesting an interview with Gamburdo."

"Gamburdo is a *cabrón*," Pepe said.

"I know. In my eyes he is an *hijo de la gran puta*. But for the present I want Gamburdo and his friends to think that I am an admirer of the *cabrito*. Clear?"

"I think I understand."

"Good. Tell all of this to Souza when you drop me at Gobernacion. When can you see him?"

"I will try to see him at once."

"*Bueno.* Let's go, then."

In the car, Hall had a fresh idea. "This young Juan Antonio, the teacher. Is he really a Communist?"

"Yes."

"Member of the party?"

"Of course. He writes for *Mundo Obrero* regularly."

"Good. If you see him, ask him to go to the Communist headquarters and from there to telephone a friend. From there, understand? Tell him to call any friend. No, wait. Make it a friend in the office of *Mundo Obrero*. I want him to denounce me to this friend as an admirer of Gamburdo and an enemy of Tabio."

"But why?"

"I have an idea that Gamburdo has made some changes since he became Acting President," Hall answered. "If he has, he's got some Cross and Sword bastards listening in on all Communist phones."

"It is possible," Pepe said. "I will discuss your idea with Juan Antonio."

"Talk him into it, Pepe."

Pepe stopped the car in front of the Gobernacion building. He promised to meet Hall at the Bolivar in two hours.

Hall entered the polished marble corridors of the Gobernacion. There was a popular song about this building. Hall thought of the words, written by no known poet, and yet so well known in the nation that it had become the unofficial anthem of the Hermanitos in the guerrilla armies which had fought the Seguristas. Even today, after nearly three decades, San Hermano youngsters learned the words from slightly older playmates when they were barely old enough to play by themselves. Somehow, the kids of the city

sang a slightly less ribald version of the ballad of the *edificio magnífico* which cost the nation over twenty million pesos and which, the song maintained, supported a village full of Don Augusto's whores and bastards.

"I want to see the Press Secretary," Hall told an attendant in the right department.

"So do I," the attendant laughed. "He resigned last week."

"Didn't anyone take his place?"

The attendant was a very old man. He leaned back in his chair and with an eloquent look gave Hall to understand that he had completely lost patience with the visitor. "*Chico*," he said, "no one could take Don Pascual's place."

"Please, *viejo*, I am in a hurry. Is anyone trying to take Don Pascual's place?"

"Ha!" The old man shifted in his chair. With withering scorn he raised his arm and pointed a handful of gnarled brown fingers at a door marked *Prensa*. There were many other men in San Hermano who pointed to things with just that gesture. Hall recognized the gesture at once. He had seen it for the first time in Geneva, when Anibal Tabio rose to make that gesture toward the pile of captured Italian and German military documents with which the Spaniards had tried to impress the League.

Hall smiled with compassion at the figure of the old man imitating the gesture of his idolized President.

"Go in, go in," the old man said, petulantly. "Go in and see that burro of a dolt who is *trying* to take Don Pascual's place."

"And has this burro a name?"

"The burro has a name. It is Valenti. Now you made me say the unspeakable name! Please, *chico*, in the name of my sainted mother and the Educator, go away!"

The old man's attitude told Hall more about what Gamburdo had already done to the Press Bureau than he could have learned in a week of routine digging. He handed the old man a cigar and a box of matches and walked through the door to Valenti's office. He found himself in a small anteroom facing a dark-haired girl pecking genteely at the keys of a typewriter with creamy fingers whose long nails were painted a deep blood red. She was immaculately groomed and pretty.

"I would like to see Señor Valenti," he said.

"Your name, Señor?"

So you had voice training, too, he thought. "Matthew Hall," he said. "I am a journalist from New York."

"How nice!" The secretary switched to English immediately. There was only the slightest suggestion of an accent to her English, and over the faint Spanish intonations she tried to impose the broad a's of something resembling the Oxford drawl. "It is quite a relief to speak English during office hours, really." She pronounced it as "re-ahl-y."

"Yours is a very good English, Miss ..."

"Vardieno," she said.

"Pick it up in school in San Hermano?"

Miss Vardieno made a mouth of disdain. "Heavens, no!" she said. "Dad sent me to finishing school in the States. Stuffy old place, but charming in its own Adirondack way. Besides, I could always sneak down to town for a week-end when it became too boring."

"Of course," Hall smiled. "Nothing like good old New York to work off a bore."

"And how! What brings you to this forsaken village?"

"Pan American Airways," he laughed. "There's a flight out of Miami every two days they tell me."

The girl laughed with him. "O.K.," she said. "I asked for it. I'll find out if Mr. Valenti can see you now." She pushed her chair back and got up, pausing mid-way long enough to give Hall a fleeting look at her breasts with a casualness she had never learned in the Adirondacks. But Hall had eyes only for the pendant which dangled at the end of a thin platinum chain. When she sat at her desk or stood erect, Miss Vardieno's Cross and Sword emblem sank neatly below the neck line of her blue New York dress.

"There are so many lovely sights in San Hermano," Hall sighed as the girl walked into the private office.

She was in the private office for quite some time. Emerging, she had regained her finishing-school poise. "I am so sorry," she said. "Mr. Valenti is tied up in a conference that will last for hours. Our Congress opens in five days, you know, and what with the situation being what it is, Mr. Hall, it is the feeling of the Press Director that it will be impossible for any writer to obtain an interview with Mr. Gamburdo until after the Congress convenes."

Nice going, he thought. "An interview with the Vice-President? But how did Mr. Valenti know that was what I wanted?"

"I don't know, Mr. Hall. I guess he just presumed. Every one wants to interview Mr. Gamburdo these days. If it keeps up I guess he'll make the cover of *Time*, don't you think?" She sat down and propped up a flower

sagging over the rim of the crystal vase on her desk. "Our pretty tropical blooms are too darned delicate, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes," Hall said, thinking not of the broken blossom but of the speed with which the text of his cable had reached Gamburdo's new Press Secretary.

Miss Vardieno brushed an imaginary fleck of dust from her skirt. "Well, anyway," she said in her best bored-with-it-all nuance, "he's going to be a vast improvement over Tovarich Tabio."

"I'll be seeing you," Hall said.

"Don't be a stranger now," Miss Vardieno said. "It's such a relief to speak English during office hours."

Hall closed the door behind him and started to whistle the ballad about the graft that built the marble halls of Gobernacion's *edificio magnífico*. "You're right," he told the old attendant. "Valenti can never wear Don Pascual's *pantalones*."

The old man's dry cackle followed Hall down the swirling marble stairs. Hall walked out to the Avenida de la Liberacion, looked in all directions for the man who had followed him the night before. The yellow straw hat was nowhere in sight. He turned his steps toward the fashionable shopping district directly south on the avenue. If his shadow were on him, he would flush him by walking down the broad, sunny avenue.

The shopping district brought no sign of the "little dog." Hall shopped the plate-glass windows, hoping to catch a tell-tale glimpse of anyone who might be on his heels. He went into a department store, bought a tropical dinner suit, and arranged to have it altered and delivered to the Bolivar at five. Then, after selecting a maroon tie and a shirt, he found a phone booth and called Fielding's office.

A Spanish-speaking secretary answered the phone. Fielding was in Alcala at an auction, she said. "Please have him call Father Arupe's secretary," Hall said.

The hot noon-day sun forced Hall to abandon his ideas of taking a leisurely stroll to the Bolivar. He found a rickety cab and relaxed on the dusty cushions. Fielding was the man he needed now, Fielding might be able to make Androtten show his cards, Fielding might have some of the answers about the new Press Chief and his brand-new secretary. And if Souza could find out who owned the Renault Androtten and the little dog used, maybe Fielding could tie the information into some of his own data and come up with something. Then when the boys in Havana answered that screwy letter perhaps they'd all have something to go by. In three days at the outside there would be word from Havana. Three days of waiting and accepting Souza and Pepe and even Fielding on faith.

At the Bolivar, the desk clerk told Hall that Pepe had called to say that he was having some minor engine trouble and would be delayed for about an hour. Hall noted the word "minor" and put it down to a delay in reaching Souza or Juan Antonio. He ordered a jug of iced pineapple juice sent up and went to his room. The long walk down the Avenida de la Liberacion under the broiling sun had covered Hall with sweat. He stripped and went to the bathroom. A slow gust of air hissed out of the faucets when Hall turned the taps. He washed his face with cold water at the basin while waiting for the pressure to force up the water to the bath faucets.

But no water came. The hissing ceased, the faucets went bone dry. Hall phoned the news down to the desk.

"I am so sorry, Señor," the clerk said. "But all the baths on your line seem to have gone dry. The manager has sent for a plumber."

Hall stretched out on his bed and tried to relax.

The desk clerk phoned him back. "Can I send the plumber up?" he asked.

"Sure." Hall put on his pants and a pair of slippers. More than anything else, at this moment, he wanted to wallow in a cold tub. The plumber, who looked enough like Pepe Delgado to be his twin, had other ideas.

"It is very serious, Señor," he complained. "There will be no water from these rotted pipes in a century." He banged the pipes with one tool and twisted them with another, cursing them as he worked. "It is very serious," he concluded. "I can do nothing on them today."

"Mother of God!" Hall said, and then he saw the sly smile on the plumber's massive face.

"Even She couldn't get any water from these pipes," the plumber said.

"How am I going to bathe?"

"Who knows? Maybe the manager will give you another room where the bath still works."

"Maybe. Well, thanks for trying."

"For nothing, Señor." The plumber picked up his tools and left.

Hall dressed and joined Pepe in the car. "What did the plumber say?" Pepe asked.

"Enough. Let's have a quick lunch somewhere."

"Souza is changing your room tonight. He is also changing the rooms of four other guests. They have no water either."

"Good work. Where are we eating?"

"When I stop the car you'll find out."

"Is the plumber your brother?"

"My cousin. I also spoke to Juan Antonio. He made that telephone call."

"Are you very hungry?" Hall asked. "I want to buy you half a steer."

"I could eat half a steer, *compañero*. And I know where to get it, too." He drove to an old garden restaurant near the beach. "Here they serve the best meat in San Hermano. And at low prices, too."

Pepe did ample justice to a tremendous steak. He washed it down with a quart of beer, chiding Hall for confining his luncheon to a simple roast-beef sandwich. "Such food is all right for little children, Señor Hall. But you are a man."

"Call me Mateo."

"You should eat like a man, *Compañero* Mateo."

"I don't feel like eating."

"Then go to a good doctor. Or take that red-headed woman into your bed for a night. You'd eat in the morning, *chico*!"

Hall laughed. "I'd rather see a doctor," he said.

"A doctor?" Pepe grew serious. "Is anything wrong?"

"Who knows? This Dr. Gonzales you mentioned. Is he a medico?"

"Yes. Would you like to see him, *Compañero* Mateo?"

"Could we see him after lunch?"

"Now is the best time. He's surely taking a little siesta, and it is better not to telephone. His daughter is at school all day. Come on, I'll drive you over."

They got into the car and Pepe swung into a street with a trolley track that led them to a middle-class suburb. He stopped in front of a gray frame house similar to any doctor's house in an American town. A fat and ancient Persian cat was sleeping in the shadiest part of the porch. Pepe meowed at the cat. She opened a lazy eye, yawned, and went back to sleep.

"The cat and her master always take their siesta at the same time," Pepe explained. "It is a very intelligent cat." He opened the screen door.

"Is there no bell?"

"He disconnects the bell when he naps." Pepe led Hall into a cool, shaded living room. There was no rug on the highly polished redwood floor. The furniture was made by native craftsmen of bamboo and wicker, although the designs reflected the functional modernism of the Bauhaus school. It was the first modern furniture Hall had ever seen in South America.

Pepe noticed Hall's interest. "The doctor has many peasant projects," he explained. "He brought some Spanish refugees from Madrid to the country to teach the peasants how to make good furniture. They have a big co-operative shop in the southern province near the Little River. Sit down in one of these new chairs. I'll get him."

Hall relaxed in one of the low-slung chairs while Pepe went to the rear part of the house. "He's not on the couch in his office," Pepe said. He went to the foot of the stairs leading into the foyer. "*Hola!* It's Delgado! *Hola!* Don Manuel, it's Delgado!" His shouts would have roused the dead. He turned around and winked to Hall. "*Abajo* Anibal Tabio!" he shouted. "*Viva* Gamburdo! *Viva* Segura! *Abajo* Tabio!"

Upstairs there was the sound of a book or a heavy shoe dropping to the floor. "Bandit!" someone shouted, and then a tall graying man in his stockinged feet shuffled to the head of the stairs, rubbing his eyes and

cursing Pepe with a mock cantankerousness. "*Bulto,*" he shouted. "Give a man a chance to put on his shoes. Show some respect for my degrees!"

Pepe made a low, courtly stage bow. "Forgive me, Your Eminence," he pleaded. "I am only a simple petitioner."

"*Momentico, compañero.*" The doctor went to his room for a pair of huaraches.

"Doctor, I want you to meet *Compañero* Mateo Hall."

"*Compañero* Hall!" The doctor started to speak English. "It is so good to finally meet you. Don Anibal gave me your book on Spain for Christmas when it was printed. He spoke to me about you very highly. Please, sit down. You will find these chairs very comfortable."

"Pepe has been telling me about your co-operative."

"It is not very large. Here, try this chair. It is my favorite."

Pepe reminded the doctor that Hall was in need of his professional services. "Excuse my bad manners, doctor," he said, "but when you start to talk about your projects ..."

"He is right," the doctor smiled. "Sometimes I do talk too much. I like to talk, even when people don't really listen to me. Even in my sleep I talk. About many things. Art. Weaving. World politics. The war."

"I like to listen," Hall said. "Where did you learn your English, doctor?"

"My English?" The doctor leaned back in his chair, the smile of a man enjoying a highly private joke on his face. "I am afraid, *compañero*, that I learned my English in the same sort of a place where you learned your excellent Spanish. That is, in a dungeon built by the Kings of Spain."

"In Spain?"

"No. I am not a Spaniard. My grandfathers were Spaniards, but my father and I were born here." He pointed to a framed flag of the Republic which hung on the wall over Hall's chair. "That flag hung in my cell in El Moro for three years, and that flag was in my hands the day Segura's death opened the prison gates to all of us." The doctor was not aware that he was now speaking in Spanish.

"The doctor was in El Moro with Don Anibal," Pepe said.

"That is true," the doctor admitted. "Nearly every patriot on the faculty and so many of the students were there, too. I had just taken my degree in medicine but I was still at the University as an instructor in biology when the arrests began. But don't think it was all tears and terror. Don Anibal and his late cousin Federico formed the so-called University Behind Bars. We had Chairs in Latin, English, biology, history, art, literature—everything. The soldiers, who were with us, smuggled in our books and papers. Later, when the Seguristas were out of power, the students who were in prison were able to take their examinations in the University of San Hermano, and the new Regents gave them full academic credit for their studies at El Moro."

"He is a sick man, doctor," Pepe said. "Examine him first and talk to him later."

"Pepe is right, *Compañero* Hall. I do talk too much."

"Nonsense. Any man who did three years in jail has a lot of talking to catch up on when he gets out."

"Will the examination take very long?" Pepe asked. "I have to go back to town. I can pick you up later."

"Have you an hour?" the doctor asked Hall.

"I have all day."

Pepe got up. "I'll be back in two hours," he laughed. He walked out to the porch. They heard him meow at the cat. Then the cat screeched and Pepe howled.

"A cat is never completely civilized," Dr. Gonzales said. "Poor Pepe refuses to believe it. And now Grisita has scratched him again."

"Your wild beast!" Pepe roared. "She clawed me!"

"Come inside, and I'll fix it, Pepe."

"No, thanks. I've got iodine in my car."

Hall expected the doctor to be amused. Instead, a wave of profound sadness gripped the man. He took out a pocket handkerchief and ran it over his forehead. "What's wrong, doctor?"

"Not much," Gonzales said. "I just can't stand the way they spare me. Since my illness it's been hell. For twelve years I was the National Minister of public health education. Don Anibal appointed me when he was Minister of Education. He created the job for me. Now I live on a pension, and outside of the few hours I put in every week as a consultant at the University and my handicraft projects, I do nothing. Biologically I am now a vegetable. And my good friends, the people of San Hermano ..."

"*Claro.* You mean they are too kind ..."

The doctor nodded. "But they are my friends," he said. "They do not do this to hurt me. And now, what bothers you?"

"My back. I think that I may have strained it."

"I can examine you better in my office. It's in the next room."

"Thank you. But first, I'd like to talk to you about some other things. I don't know what's going on, but I do know that something is wrong. I knew Don Anibal in Geneva, and I know that if he were well, your country would break with the Axis...."

The doctor sighed. "You are not alone," he said. "Don Anibal is a very sick man. No one seems to know what is wrong, exactly. He is paralyzed from the hips down, and he grows weaker every day. The mind is still strong, but it must rest so much that none of us dare to tax Don Anibal with worries other than his health. In the meanwhile, Gamburdo has taken over."

"And Gamburdo? Is he honest?"

"Gamburdo is not a man of good will. He is a clever lawyer and a very intelligent man. His family prospered under Segura, but the General seduced a Gamburdo daughter, and that turned them against the Seguristas. Gamburdo volunteered his services as a lawyer when Tabio and the Republican junta was in jail. But this offer was a calculating gamble. He knew that Segura's days were numbered; he knew that the leaders of the junta would be the new government of the nation. He joined the Party of Radical Socialism, but when he became its head, he saw to it that, like himself, the party became neither radical nor socialist."

"He was for Franco, you know," Hall said.

"I know. He was for Franco and the Falange and against Tabio. But he is very intelligent. He managed to keep these things nicely hidden. When Tabio was elected President and created the new government of national unity, Gamburdo joined forces with Don Anibal—but only to destroy this unity from within.

"This is the least of his sins. It seems that he has kept all the Republican doctors from the Presidencia. The only doctors Gamburdo has permitted are the reactionaries, the old servants of the Seguristas. We tried to talk to Don Anibal, but you know him and his saintly faith in the goodness of Man. I think that, deliberately, he has placed his life in Gamburdo's hands as a lesson to all of his old friends in the need for real unity. It is as if he means to prove to us, by getting well, that unity is the most important issue in the nation today."

"And Dr. Ansaldo? Is he really good?"

"He has a great reputation. But it is a gamble for Gamburdo alone. If Don Anibal recovers, Gamburdo and his friends will say that it was a Spaniard who saved the President. If he dies—even a great Spanish doctor could not save him. Either way, Gamburdo stands to gain."

In the office Hall took a chair facing the microscope on the doctor's white enameled metal desk. He watched the doctor hunt through the instrument cases along the wall. On a lower shelf, the doctor found his stethoscope.

"Would you please remove your shirt?"

Hall shook his head. "No," he said. He gently took the stethoscope from the doctor's hands, carefully folded it and put it away in a small wooden box he found on the desk. "This is what I really came for, doctor."

"My stethoscope?"

"Exactly." He explained to the doctor that with such instruments one could easily hear through an average indoor wall. "I have a queer feeling," he said, "that with your stethoscope I can perhaps get a hint as to what is actually wrong with Don Anibal,—or, at least, in San Hermano."

The doctor gave Hall his hand. "I won't ask you any questions," he said. "But may I wish you luck?"

"Thank you."

"Now let me fix you a cold drink. I'm not very good in the kitchen, but we'll see what we can both do."

Pepe returned with news for Hall about the change of rooms at the hotel. Hall now had the room next to Ansaldo's sitting room. He also told him that the Spanish Republican societies were planning an *homenaje* for Hall. "They formed a committee to arrange it with you, but I told them that you didn't want to see them until next week."

"I hope you were pleasant," Hall said.

"Of course I was, Mateo. I just thought you didn't want too much noise about you in San Hermano for the next few days."

"Maybe you're right, Pepe."

"What do you want to do now?"

"Take a bath. I'm going to a party at the American Embassy tonight. But tomorrow I think we'll have a lot of work to do, *compañero*."

"I wonder what happened to the little dog?"

"Maybe I'll know some more about him tonight."

"What have you got in the box?"

"Medicine."

Pepe snorted. "*Mierda!*" he laughed. "What you really need is ..."

"I know," Hall said, sharply. "That girl with the red hair."

"Excuse me," Pepe said. "I am not a doctor."

"You are too modest, *ilustre*."

"Have a good time tonight. I'll be waiting for you in the morning. Or, if you change your mind, leave word with Fernando."

"Good. Until tomorrow, then." Hall got the key to his new room from the clerk, as well as the packages he had ordered earlier in the day.

The new room was larger than the other one. His clothes and bags had already been moved in, and the chambermaid had made a creditable effort to put them away as Hall had previously done. Hall went to the window, saw that it looked out on the Plaza. He adjusted his window shutters for privacy. The wall between his room and Ansaldo's sitting room had only a bureau against it. Hall moved the chest slightly to one side, made room for a small, solid chair. Then he took his bath.

He was shaving when he heard Ansaldo return to the Bolivar. He wrapped a towel around his middle, put the plastic prongs of the stethoscope in his ears, and sat down on the little chair facing the wall. The hearing end of the stethoscope picked up only footsteps. The sounds told their own story. The man in the next room was walking to the window, then opening the shutters, then sitting on the couch. There were other footsteps, lighter and less pronounced. Perhaps another person in the room was wearing soft slippers or going barefooted, like Hall himself.

"Are you tired, *ilustre*?" It was Marina.

"No. Why should I be tired?" Ansaldo.

Marina giggled.

"Did you find out?" Ansaldo asked.

"Not yet, *ilustre*. What was it like to examine Tovarich Tabio?"

Ansaldo laughed. "Let me take care of the Tovarich, please. And don't act too happy at the Embassy tonight."

"I am not a fool, *ilustre*. Didn't the Caudillo himself personally decorate me for bravery?"

"Now you are being a boor. I detest boors."

"I am sorry, *ilustre*."

"Try to find out if they are coming in tonight."

"They would not be coming by Clipper," Marina said. "Too dangerous."

There was the rustle of paper, followed by the padded footsteps. Then someone—Hall guessed it was Marina—sat down in a creaky armchair. The man with the shoes got up and walked in the direction opposite from Hall's room. Hall heard a door open, followed a few seconds later by the rush of water into a tub. He remained in his chair, his stethoscope still against the plaster.

The phone near Hall's bed started to ring. He got up very quietly, tiptoed over to the bed. He hid the stethoscope under his pillow before he answered.

"Hello, it's me."

"Yeah, Jerry."

"Speak louder. I can't hear you."

"Sure." He went on speaking with his hand around the mouthpiece to muffle the sound. "Can you hear me now?"

"Just about. Listen, I've got lots to tell you. I was with Doctor when he examined the President, and he was magnificent!"

"The patient?"

"No, you dope. The doctor. What are you doing now?"

"Nothing. Getting dressed."

"Me too. Buy me a drink and I'll tell you all about it."

"Right now?"

Jerry laughed.

"I know," he said. "You're not wearing a thing at the moment."

"Just a second. There. Now you're right about one thing, anyway."

"Don't tempt me," he warned. "I might decide to check up for myself."

"Not now you won't! Meet you downstairs in about twenty minutes. O.K.?"

Hall finished his shave and dressed, toying all the while with the notion of walking down the corridor to Jerry's room before she had a chance to leave. Pepe would heartily approve, he thought, and, besides, since that hour in the woods on top of Monte Azul, Jerry had not exactly indicated that he would be unwelcome if he made a try. But while he speculated, Jerry phoned him again from downstairs. "Daydreaming?" she asked, and he answered, "Yes, about you."

She met him at the elevator in the lobby. "Come on," she laughed, "let's go to that place in back of the Cathedral. The little Dutch drip was around here a second ago. He wants to tell you the story of his life, he told me."

"O.K. Let's just keep walking."

She took his arm as they left the hotel. "Miss me?" she asked.

"I did."

"You're a liar."

Hall winced. "Is that the best you have to say? How about the magnificent doctor?"

"He's really good, Matt. I'm not kidding. I've worked with some corking medics in my day, but this guy is tops." She told Hall about the masterly way in which Ansaldo had taken command of the situation, kicking all the San Hermano doctors out of the sick room and examining Tabio only in the presence of Marina, Jerry and Tabio's son.

"What's the matter with him?"

"Ansaldo has an idea. But he has to make certain."

"What does it look like to you?"

"It could be many things. What's good to drink here?"

"Anything. Scotch and soda?"

"Oke. But really, Matt, you should have seen Doctor in that sick room." She launched into a long and enthusiastic account of the doctor at work.

The girl was on the point of repeating herself when Hall cut her short. "Listen," he said. "Let me tell you something about Anibal Tabio and his generation of young democrats who walked out of jail and started to make history." He told her of the schools and the hospitals which had been built in the country in the last decade, of the minimum-wage laws, of the work of Tabio followers like Dr. Gonzales.

He told her how he first met Tabio in Geneva. "His was supposed to be just a small voice in the League; a little South American dressing to make the whole show look good. But a month after he got there, Mussolini started to pop his goo-goo eyes at Ethiopia. Hoare and Laval and Halifax were so nice and ready to give the Italian steamroller a healthy shove downhill to Addis Ababa. Then one afternoon Litvinov got up to fire some heavy shots. But that was expected. Then del Vayo started, and the fun began. Because, when Vayo was through, it was Tabio's turn. And lady, what Anibal Tabio did to hot shots like Hoare and Laval without even raising his voice was just plain murder."

Jerry put her hand on Hall's arm. "I suppose I read about it in the papers at the time. It didn't mean much to me then. I'm afraid it didn't mean much to me until right now, Matt."

"Weren't you interested in what happened in the world?"

"Not too much, I'm afraid. I was interested in myself. I was making up my mind to go to Reno, and then I sat in Reno for six weeks cramming on my old school books, and then I was off to nursing school."

"Didn't Ethiopia, and later Spain, make any impression upon you?" Hall's question was very gently stated.

"Of course it did, Matt. I was sorry for the Africans and I was sorry for the Spaniards. I wanted Mussolini to get licked and I wanted the Loyalists to win. But most of all I wanted to get through nursing school and then earn enough money to study medicine."

"In other words, if Geraldine Olmstead got her M.D., all would be right with the world, eh?"

She avoided his eyes. "It sounds stupid and mean," she said. "But I guess I deserve it. I'm afraid that was the idea."

"When did the idea die?"

"About ten seconds ago, when you put it into words," she admitted. "I never thought of it in that way before. But I wasn't the only one, Matt."

"Hell, no! You were in a majority when the war started. The whole country was sitting back and, as it thought, minding its own business. We thought we were wonderfully immune until the bombs began to drop on Pearl Harbor."

"Now you're being gallant," she laughed. "There were plenty of people in the country like—like you, Matt. Have we time for another drink?"

Hall was staring into space. Suddenly he exploded. "*Madre de Dios!* Now I remember!"

"Remember what? You look like you've seen a ghost."

"I have." Hall tapped his head. "In here."

Jerry laughed. "I wish someone would come along and tell me what this is all about."

"There's no time. Let's get back to the hotel. I've got to change clothes and there's a guy I want to see before I go to the party."

"But what's it all about?"

"I'll tell you later."

Walking back to the hotel, he asked Jerry if she had ever found the solution to a problem in a dream. "Because just now I did. Do you remember when you woke me up this morning that I sounded like a guy in a fog? Well, I was. But just a few minutes ago at that table on the sidewalk, the fog lifted."

"And now you feel better?"

"Sure. It's all over."

"I think you're lying. I think that whatever it is, it's just beginning."

"No. It's over."

Jerry was right. But what she did not know was that the fog had lifted on Dr. Varela Ansaldo. The doctor was the Spanish officer of Hall's dream, the one at whose back Hall hurled the knife. And at the table, sipping his second drink, Hall had recalled in a flash where he had seen Varela Ansaldo before. It had happened in Burgos, in April of 1938, during a review of the 12th Division of the fascist army. Ansaldo, wearing the uniform of a Franco major, with a big Falange yoke and arrows sewn over the left breast pocket, had shared a bench on the reviewing stand with an Italian and a German officer. Directly behind them, on that day, had flown the flags of Imperial Spain, The Falange, Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Hall remembered the tableau vividly, remembered so clearly perhaps because while watching the review from the sidewalk he had been annoyed by the staff photographer of Franco's *Arriba*, who must have shot a hundred pictures of the officials in the stands that day and who had also shoved Hall aside or stepped on his toes before shooting each picture.

"I'll see you at the Embassy tonight," he said.

"Oke. But get that scowl off your face first," she smiled. "You promised to be nice tonight, and right now you look as if you are planning to kill someone with your bare hands."

Chapter six

The American Embassy was three blocks beyond the Presidencia. Hall wanted to walk to the party, but when he reached the street he became self-conscious about his palm-beach tuxedo jacket, and he hailed a strange cab.

The Embassy was housed in an old Spanish palace which a former Ambassador had left to the United States Government in his will. After the first World War, when the government had taken title to the palace, Washington sent an architect and an office efficiency man to San Hermano to redesign the structure. The outside remained more or less intact. But inside, many changes had been effected. The spacious street floor, designed as the slave quarters in the seventeenth century and later converted to storerooms and servants' quarters, was now a hive of offices and waiting rooms. The second floor was devoted largely to a tremendous ballroom, a state dining room, and the tapestried private offices of the Ambassador himself. The living quarters of the Ambassador took up the third floor, while the low-ceilinged fourth floor, originally designed for soldiers, was now given over to servants' rooms.

A secretary at the entrance checked Hall's name off against a list on a teak table. He took the carpeted stairs to the ballroom. Two butlers stood at a screen in the doorway to the big room. The first butler announced his name, but not loud enough to disturb any of the Ambassador's two hundred-odd guests. The second butler nodded to Hall, and led the way through a maze of dignitaries, diplomats' wives, and young people trying to dance to the music a rumba band was producing from a bandstand in a corner. Hall followed him patiently, looking for a sign of Jerry's red hair. The butler

nodded gravely at a young girl dancing with a thin Latin in tails. She left her dancing partner and advanced on Hall with an outstretched hand.

"Mr. Matthew Hall, Miss Margaret," the butler whispered.

"I'm so glad you came, Mr. Hall. I'm Margaret Skidmore." Her hand, thin and remarkably strong, was covered with a white net glove that reached to her elbow.

"It's nice of you to have me," Hall said.

Margaret Skidmore took his arm. "We must get you a drink," she said, "and introduce you to some of the more interesting people here. And oh, yes, to my father. But I warn you, he's not in the first category." She was short; much smaller than Jerry, Hall thought, but a bird of a different color. As they crossed the room, a wisp of the black hair piled on top of her head dropped over her eye. Hall was amused by the way she blew the hair to one side twice before deciding to lift it with her gloved hand.

"This is my Dad's favorite punch," she said at the buffet table. "I forgot to tell you that the party is to celebrate the third anniversary of his mission."

Hall ladled out two cups. "Here's to the next three years," he toasted.

"The next three years are the ones that will count," Margaret Skidmore said. She was smiling at Hall and at some other guests when she said it, but it was not polite banter.

"The Press Secretary of the Embassy is sore at you," she said. "He's angry because you tried to get to Gamburdo without him."

"I'm sorry," Hall said. "If you'll introduce me to him, I'll try to make amends."

"Don't bother," she laughed. "Smitty's a stuffed shirt who needs to be taken down a peg or two. But I must say that you look a lot different than I thought you would, Mr. Hall."

"I know. I'm supposed to look like a hero and I have the face of a mugg. Or a gorilla." He was still looking for Jerry. "You're a surprise, too."

"Am I so different?" There was coquettish amusement in her hazel eyes. She tilted her fragile doll's nose, forced a haughty cast to her small-girl's face. "Is an Ambassador's daughter supposed to be a high-and-mighty lady like this?"

"No. I like you better the other way."

"Thanks. It's my only way."

Hall spotted Jerry on the dance floor with Varela Ansaldo. Jerry looked very happy, and Ansaldo had lost some of his undertaker's grimness. He tried in vain to catch her eye.

"Here comes my father."

Hall found himself shaking hands with a portly, middle-aged American who wore tails as if to the manor born. J. Burton Skidmore had the most imposing head of wavy gray hair in the entire hemisphere, and he knew it. His face, still ruddy and youngish, was pink and smelled of fine cologne.

"*Con mucho gusto,*" the Ambassador said, holding Hall's hand and bowing slightly from the waist.

"I'm glad to meet you, sir," Hall said.

"Father, Mr. Hall is an American. He is Matthew Hall, the writer. You know. Matthew Hall." The childish, well-bred-daughter smile on Margaret

Skidmore's face could not conceal the acid contempt in her voice. "Mr. Hall is an American, from New York."

"Oh, yes, oh, yes, indeed. Hall. Of course, Mr. Hall. Been in San Hermano long, Mr. Hall?"

"No, sir. Less than a week."

"Fine place, Mr. Hall. Fine people. Have you met Smitty yet? Dear, have you seen Smitty? I think he and Mr.—Mr. Hall could find much in common, Margaret."

"Tomorrow," Margaret Skidmore said, and the Ambassador helped himself to a cup of punch.

"*Amigo Mateo!*"

Without turning around, Hall said, in Spanish, "Only one man in all the world has a scratchy voice like that," and then he turned around and embraced Felipe Duarte.

"What brings you to San Hermano?" he asked Duarte.

"I am now a diplomat. First Counselor of the Mexican Embassy in San Hermano and guest professor of literature at the University."

Hall and Duarte had last met in Spain, where Duarte had served as a Lieutenant-Colonel with the regular Spanish People's Army. "*Coronel* Pancho Villa" was the name his men gave him, and the thin, gangling Mexican scholar had fought like a terror to live up to this name. Of Duarte, the General Staff officers said that he was as bad a strategist as he was brave a man, which would have made him one of the worst strategists in military history. But during the Ebro retreat, Duarte had taught the veteran professional officers a few things about the tactics of guerrilla warfare which raised his standing as a soldier.

Duarte took Margaret Skidmore's hand and raised it to his lips. "*Enchanté*," he sighed, and she knew at once that he was laughing at her.

"Señor Ambassador," Duarte said, speaking rapid Spanish, "this is one of the most magnificent parties I have ever attended. How do you manage to give such splendid parties with only your chit of a daughter to help you shove food down the ulcerous throats of these sons of whore mothers, dear Señor Ambassador? It is stupendous. It is colossal."

The Ambassador smiled, shook Duarte's hand, and bowing slightly, he murmured, "*Con mucho gusto*." Then, still smiling, he turned and walked away.

"Don't let this guy fool you," Hall said to the Ambassador's daughter. "He speaks English as well as we do."

"Better," Duarte said. "Ah learned mah English in Texas, Ah'll have yo'all know, suh. And Mateo, don't let Margaret's innocent smile fool you. She knows almost enough Spanish to know what I just told her distinguished papa."

"Some day I'm going to know enough," Margaret laughed. "And when I do, you're going to get your face slapped in front of everyone, I'm afraid. Tell me, Mateo, does *hijos de la gran puta* mean what I think it does?"

"That sounds like slang to me," Hall said. "I learned my Spanish on the Linguaphone."

"You're a fast boy, Matt," she said. "Call me Margaret, if you wish." She straightened Hall's tie with a perfumed glove. "I'll give you a little time with Felipe, and then I'll steal you back. There are many people here tonight who want to meet you."

"Hurry back," Duarte said. "He bores me stiff when I have him on my hands too long."

"You bastard," Hall said. "You're a diplomat now. Don't you ever stop clowning?"

"Sure. When I kill fascists I am very serious. You know that, Mateo. But here, if I did not clown, I would die of boredom. For example, when Skidmore gives a party, the politicos in my Embassy, they all find reasons for being out of town. I am not a politico. I am a professor of literature and a killer of fascists, by profession; a diplomat because someone wanted to do Lombardo a favor and at the same time remove my face from the domestic scene. *Claro?* So it is clown or die. And if I must die, I prefer to die having a second crack at Franco."

"*Claro, amigo.* But must you wear a suit like this one?"

Duarte's evening clothes were his cloak of independence. He wore a cheap tuxedo he had bought in New York for twenty dollars and a pair of worn patent-leather shoes that creaked as he walked. On state occasions, he wore the medals he had earned on the battlefields in Spain. For private parties, he simply wore an enameled gold Mexican flag on his lapel. Tonight, he wore only the flag.

All this he explained to Hall in his gay, rasping Spanish. "When the Falangist Embassy was still on good terms, I wore my Republican medals all the time. But just before Don Anibal took sick, he insulted the Caudillo in a speech before the University faculty, and when the Franco Ambassador called to ask for an apology Tabio told him that the truth called for no apologies. So the Caudillo got sore and he called his Ambassador home. The Embassy is still open, but a clerk is in charge, and there isn't a Spanish diplomat in San Hermano of high enough standing to be invited to any Embassy."

Jerry joined them, and when Hall presented her to Duarte, the Mexican kissed her hand and murmured, "*Enchanté*."

"Miss Olmstead is Dr. Ansaldo's nurse," Hall said.

"How very interesting," Duarte said. "May I have this dance with the nurse of Dr. Ansaldo?" and before she had a chance to say that her feet were killing her, the dexterous Duarte was guiding her through the steps of an intricate rumba he improvised at that moment.

Hall took another glass of punch. Duarte was his friend, but at the moment he wanted to break his neck. He wanted Jerry for himself, and he hated the idea of admitting or showing it. He watched them so intently that he failed to see Margaret return to the punch bowl.

"Deserted?" she asked. "Our friend Felipe would desert his mother for a redhead."

"He's quite a guy," Hall laughed.

"Come on," she said. "There's a crowd that's been dying to meet you. The country's biggest publisher and some of the more important business men."

"Fernandez?"

"That's right. He publishes *El Imparcial*. Confidentially, his paper is getting the Cabot Prize this year. Dad arranged it."

Fernandez was standing with a group of three Hermanitos and a blonde fortyish woman in a tight dress whom Hall recognized instantly as an American. "I'm Giselle Prescott," she said, her smile revealing flecks of lipstick on her yellow teeth.

"Take care of the amenities, will you, Gis?" Margaret Skidmore said. "Dad is flagging me over at the other end." She picked up her skirts, hurried to

her father's rescue.

Giselle Prescott introduced Hall to José Fernandez, tall, handsome, in his early fifties. Fernandez presented him to Segundo Vardieno, Francisco Davila, and Alfonso Quinones. Davila was a man of one age and build with Fernandez, the other two were shorter and about ten years younger. Breathlessly, Giselle Prescott told Hall that Vardieno and Quinones were among the ten largest landowners in the nation, and Davila its leading attorney. They all made modest denials.

Quinones asked Giselle to dance, and she accepted gladly. Her myriad blonde ringlets neatly blocked her partner's forward view.

"Very accomplished writer," Hall said. "In the popular magazine field, Miss Prescott is supreme."

"She is very able," Davila said. Like Quinones and Vardieno, he wore the emblem of the Cross and the Sword in his lapel. Fernandez wore only the ribbon of the French Legion of Honor.

"My niece told me that you had some difficulties at the Press Bureau today," Vardieno said.

"Your niece?" Then he remembered the golden Cross and Sword dangling from the thin golden chain. "Oh, yes, the young lady who speaks English so well."

Vardieno explained to Fernandez that Hall had been unable to arrange for an interview with Gamburdo. "Don't you think you could help Señor Hall?" Davila asked, and Fernandez assured the three men that the matter would be taken care of in the morning. Of course, it might not be possible until after the Congress convened, but then politics in San Hermano being what they were, the illustrious colleague from North America would surely be understanding.

"What's the inside on the political picture?" Hall asked, and the three men, talking in unison and talking singly gave him one picture.

Their picture was very detailed. "El Tovarich—our Red President, you know," had lined up the unruly elements behind a dangerous program of confiscating the estates of their rightful owners and turning them over to communist gunmen. In addition to this land-piracy scheme, Tabio also intended to drive the Catholic Church underground and impose heavy penalty taxes on the parents who sent their children to Catholic parochial schools. To aid in this program, Tabio was throwing open the gates of the nation to Red agitators disguised as Jewish and Spanish refugees.

"So it's as bad as that," Hall said.

"Worse." Fernandez looked around him. "Come closer," he said. "There's something I must tell you about your own safety."

"My safety?"

"Yes, Señor." Fernandez had his right hand on Hall's shoulder. "Late this afternoon I received a confidential information that the Communist Party in San Hermano had privately denounced you to its members."

"Denounced me? But why?"

"Yes, Señor. And it was a most dangerous denunciation, too. A prominent communist leader telephoned the editor of the official Red paper and denounced you for being an enemy of Tovarich Tabio and a supporter of Señor Gamburdo."

Hall smiled. "But that couldn't be so bad," he demurred. "The Reds are always denouncing someone. Tomorrow the Communist Party paper will attack me as a fascist, and I guess that will be the end of the whole thing."

"No, that is not what will happen," Segundo Vardieno insisted. "Tell him the rest of the information, Don José."

Again José Fernandez looked around to make sure that he was not being overheard. "Señor Vardieno is right, my friend. You see," he said, "the Red who phoned the *Mundo Obrero* ordered the editor *not* to print a word about you—yet. Do you understand what that means?"

Davila, the lawyer, explained. "What Don José means," he said, "is that a secret denunciation generally precedes an assassination. You see, Señor Hall, if the Reds denounce you in their press, you would be marked before the world as an enemy of the Tovarich. Then, if anything happened to you—they are not only blameless, but even after killing you they can make great propaganda about how the alleged fascists killed you because you are a noted American patriot who stands for free enterprise."

"Pretty clever," Hall said.

"Jewish cleverness!" Segundo Vardieno was shaking with rage. "Give a Jew a hundred pesos and in a day he has a thousand and you'll never know how he did it. But will he apply his cleverness for the good of the country? No! Only for communism."

"Is Tabio a Jew?" Hall asked.

"Confidentially," Vardieno answered, "El Tovarich is a Sephardic Jew. But we're not making it public because we are gentlemen."

"And only because we are gentlemen," Fernandez added. "I don't think El Tovarich will be among us much longer."

"Is he really that sick?"

"Oh, yes," Davila said. "You know what happened to him, don't you? No? Well, it's almost like the Hand of Divine Retribution." He told Hall that

Tabio had turned over to one of his henchman a vineyard confiscated from an old family, and that in gratitude the henchman had started to distill a special brandy for the Tovarich. "And now, the excess alcohol from too much of the stolen grape has taken its toll."

"Well, what do you know!" Hall said.

"It is the gospel truth," Fernandez said. "I have ways of confirming the story."

"Some mess, isn't it?" Hall said.

"It is filled with dangers," Vardieno said. "Your calmness is admirable, Señor Hall, but you had better watch out. The Reds are out to kill you."

Hall accepted a cigar from José Fernandez, took his time about lighting it before answering Vardieno. "Oh, I don't know," he said, casually. "Perhaps you might know that earlier in this war, I was on board a British warship which the Nazis sunk with aerial torpedoes. I not only survived, but I came through without a scratch. Since then I just can't get too excited about a threat." He looked at the three men to see if his braggart's act succeeded. Fernandez was obviously the most impressed of the three.

"*Bueno! Muy caballero!*" Fernandez said. "But you had better be careful. The Reds in San Hermano have none of the sporting codes of the Nazi airman."

"Well, now that you mention it," Hall said, "I did catch some bastard following me the other day."

In a small voice, Davila asked, "Did you get a good look at him?"

"I most certainly did. He was a big, clumsy brute in the white linen suit of a respectable business man and a panama hat. But I'll bet a good box of Havana cigars that he was a longshoreman or a miner. I know the type."

Davila looked at Vardieno and Fernandez. A slow grin crept over the lawyer's face, and then the other two Hermanitos were grinning too. "So they started, eh?" he said. "Well, don't let that big one worry you too much. Should he, Don José?"

The publisher grunted. "No. Don't worry about that one." Hall could sense that Fernandez was picking up his cue from the lawyer.

"As a matter of fact," Davila said, "I'll wager that you can find the picture of the man in the white suit in Don José's confidential file on the Reds. He keeps it in his office in the *Imparcial* building."

"I would be honored if you visited me in my office," José Fernandez said to Hall.

"Perhaps I can make it this week," Hall said.

"Sst," Davila warned. "Miss Prescott is coming back. Let's change the subject."

"Of course," Vardieno said. "There is no sense in involving her in this."

"This is quite a turnout," Hall was saying when Giselle Prescott and Quinones rejoined the group. "I think that every nation is represented by its Ambassador here."

"Every nation but Spain," Quinones said. "El Tovarich took care of that by insulting the Ambassador and the Chief of the Spanish State."

"It's true," Vardieno said. "Spain is a good customer for our nation, but El Tovarich is so angry at Generalissimo Franco for destroying communism in the Motherland that he is deliberately trying to destroy this trade in order to get even with Franco."

"He not only insulted Spain," Quinones said. "In his speech to the University, El Tovarich said that only the so-called fascists in San Hermano supported Franco."

"Sounds like our pinkos back home," Giselle Prescott said to Hall.

Fernandez exploded. "I am a good Catholic," he snapped. "I am pious. During the Civil War I supported Franco. I was proud to support him. I not only supported Franco, but I was delighted to hail Hitler and Mussolini as noble allies in the struggle against Jewish Bolshevism. But am I a fascist? I defy any man to call me a fascist or a Falangist to my face!"

Davila turned to both Hall and Giselle Prescott. "Now don't jump to any false conclusions about Don José," he smiled. "After all, you Americans are not Reds because you welcome the godless Russian armies of Stalin as your allies in this present war, are you?"

"Bull's-eye!" Giselle Prescott laughed. "I'm delighted to hear you both talk like this. Back home only the Reds and the pinkos were for the so-called Spanish Loyalists during the war." She opened her tiny purse and found a leather address book. "Gimme a pencil or a pen, will you, Hall?"

"Sure. What for?"

"I want to put down what Señor Fernandez and Señor Davila just said before I forget. I'm doing a piece for a mag and these quotes would just fit in. May I quote you, gentlemen?"

"I have nothing to conceal," Fernandez said proudly.

Davila was very gracious. "Of course you may use these remarks. But please don't use Don José's name in your article. It might be misunderstood. You see, Don José has many enemies in the Jewish and radical press in your country."

"On my honor as a Girl Scout," she said, "I'll use the quotes but not the names."

"You've got quite a story there," Hall said. He was looking into the mob on the dance floor for a sign of Jerry. Her red hair was not to be found, but Margaret Skidmore, dancing with a bemedaled diplomat, caught his eye and gestured that she would join him at the end of that dance. She took him away from the group in a few minutes and led him toward the American bar she had rigged up for the party.

"They sure were talking at you for a while," she said. "I could see them giving it to you with both barrels."

"That they were. What is the lowdown, anyway? Are those boys completely right about Tabio?"

Margaret was amused. "Oh, they're a gang of hotheads, I warn you. But nice. I suspect that our friend Giselle is going to find Don José particularly nice."

"Meow!"

"I'm not a cat. I just know Giselle."

"Let's talk about San Hermano politics. I think you know plenty in that little head of yours."

"Oh, I do. But tonight's a party. I've got to be Daddy's good little Hostess."

"Like it?"

"Bores me silly," Margaret said.

"Perhaps we can talk some other time?"

"Tomorrow would be swell. I have to go to my place in Juarez early in the morning. Why don't you come out for lunch? It's a two-hour ride by train from San Hermano. I think you can make a train at eleven."

"Tomorrow?" Hall hesitated.

"I wish you'd make it," the girl said with a sudden intensity.

"It's a date."

"I'll meet you at the station."

They joined her father and one of the Embassy secretaries at the bar. Hall had a Cuba Libre, and was introduced to a South American painter. He listened to the painter talk to the Ambassador about the beauties of Arizona, watched J. Burton Skidmore gravely shake hands with the painter and mutter, "*Con mucho gusto*." Then the painter asked Margaret to dance and, when she left, Hall wandered off to look for Jerry.

He found her at the punch bowl with Ansaldo. "May I ask Miss Olmstead for this dance?" he asked the doctor.

"Just this one dance," Jerry said, "I'll be right back."

She put her cheek against his, softly hummed the tune the band was playing.

"It's nice to have you in my arms," he said.

"It's nice to be in your arms."

He held her closer. They danced well together. So well that when Jerry said it would be better if they did not dance again that night, Hall made up his mind to leave at once. "I can't hang around and watch you dancing with Ansaldo all night," he said.

"Why, Massa Hall," she said, "Ah swain Ah do believe you-all are jealous!"

"Did Duarte give you English lessons in one rumba, too?"

"You're a goof," she laughed.

He took her back to Ansaldo, paid his respects to the Ambassador, and looked for Duarte. The Mexican was talking to the tall young wife of the Vichy Ambassador.

"Felipe," Hall tugged at Duarte's sleeve, "I am afraid that I must go now."

"I'll go with you, if you're alone. Madame, *enchanté* ..." He winked at Hall as he kissed Madame la Comtesse's hand. "Now we must pay our respects to our host."

"I already have."

"Come with me while I do. I never miss it. He has kept me from squandering my money. I bet with myself on him, and I always lose. So Felipe pays Duarte, and Duarte supports Felipe."

"What the hell are you babbling about now?"

"Your Ambassador. He is an original, Mateo. For three years he draws me to his parties as a lodestone draws baser metals. In three years, he has learned exactly three words of Spanish: *'Con mucho gusto*.' Of course he still says them with a gringo accent, but anyone can recognize what he means.

"For three years I am waiting for him to learn a new word, any word. *Si. No. Pan. Mantequilla.* Right now, I'd settle for just one new word.

"In the beginning, when I was green in the business of diplomacy, I was younger and more optimistic. Then I would not have settled for a word. I wanted a whole new phrase. Nothing complicated, you understand. Any

simple phrase would have satisfied me. *Tiene usted un fósforo?* Or even—*Dónde está la sala de caballeros?* But no. Tennyson's brook burbles forever, and unto eternity J. Burton Skidmore will not learn more than his three words, and damn it, he won't even learn how to speak them correctly."

"And you're still betting on him?" Hall asked.

"What can I do?" Duarte said. "We stupid Mexican peons have such a deep faith in mankind that we are always betrayed."

"Here comes the Ambassador now."

"*Oiga!*" Duarte stopped Skidmore, took his hand, and let loose a stream of Mexican obscenities, spoken in dulcet, smiling tones. When he paused for breath, Skidmore smiled genially, bowed slightly from the hips, and said, "*Con mucho gusto*."

Hall nearly collapsed with laughter when he and Duarte reached the street. "You bastard," he said, "you'll kill me before my time."

"Let's have a drink before you die."

"Sure. But let's run over to the Bolivar first. I want to see if there's a message. Besides, we could stand some fresh air."

Duarte agreed. "I saw Fernandez and Vardieno trying to gas you," he said. "You could use some air."

"You're not kidding, Felipe."

"How do you like the Falange in San Hermano?"

"You mean Fernandez and his friends?"

"Of course. That Pepito Fernandez, there is an *hijo de la chingada* for you, Mateo. Once, when he was keeping a woman in Paris ..." and Duarte was

off on a long hilarious story about the publisher and his lady of the hour. He was still telling the story when they reached the darkened Plaza de la Republica and Hall suggested that they cut across the cobbles rather than walk two-thirds of the way around the square.

Hall stepped off the sidewalk and took three steps before he noticed the large Rolls-Royce bearing down on them with her throttle wide open and her lights off. "Jump!" he shouted, but Duarte, who saw it first, had already yanked Hall back to the sidewalk.

"Get behind this pillar, quick!" Duarte had a small pistol in his hand. He stood watching the Rolls roar across the Plaza and disappear into the alley leading to the Avenida de la Liberacion.

"It's almost like old times," Hall said.

"He tried to kill you, Mateo."

"Better put your gun away. And we'll have that drink first, I think."

"I'm going to phone for a car from the Mexican Embassy from the next phone, *chico*. Those bastards weren't playing."

"Put the gun away. It was a bluff."

"You mean you expected it?"

"Hell, no! I didn't think it would take so soon. But they had no intention of killing me tonight."

"The Arrows?"

"I think so."

Duarte put the gun in his pocket. "I don't understand. It seems a little too subtle for the Falange. Are you working for your government now?"

"No. They turned me down. They said I was pro-Loyalist during the war. Right now that makes you a Red in Washington. I'm traveling on my own."

"On your own?"

"I'm well-heeled. My last book sold like hell. So now I'm young Don Quixote."

"And your Sancho Panza?"

"I have none. Or rather, I have thousands of them. Exiles. Taxi drivers. Union leaders. Communists. First Secretaries of Mexican Embassies."

"What are you after?"

"The Falange."

"Good. I can help you, *chico*."

"You'll have to. Wait, I'm going into the hotel for a minute. Come on along. I'll only be a second."

Duarte took a seat in the lobby while Hall talked to Souza. There was still no letter from Havana, but Souza had some information about the Renault Androtten had used. "It is a for-hire car owned by the Phoenix Garage on Reyes Street."

"Can you find out who hired it the other night?"

"That will not be so easy, *Compañero* Hall. The mechanics in the Phoenix are not union members. But we are trying to reach someone there. Perhaps by tomorrow we will know."

"There's something else you can find out. Perhaps from the Mechanics Union. Find out how many Rolls-Royce roadsters there are in San Hermano. I know it will be hard, but it's important."

"I will try. Must you know soon?"

"Very soon, Fernando. A Rolls-Royce roadster, it was painted black or dark blue, I think, and just tried to run down Duarte and me in the Plaza."

Souza made some notes on a slip of paper. "Maybe we can find out tonight," he said.

"Good. I'll be back in an hour. Is Androtten in his room?"

"No. He's been out all evening."

Duarte knew a quiet little bar a few blocks from the Bolivar. "They call it a lover's retreat," he said when they got there. "You can see why." Most of the tables were surrounded with lattice walls, and those tables which were occupied were monopolized by couples who looked into one another's eyes and said little.

"There's Ansaldo's *maricón*," Duarte laughed. "In the table at the back. I know the boy who's with him, too. He's a blue blood from the Vichy Embassy."

Hall watched Marina and the French boy. They had pink drinks made with gin and grenadine and raw eggs. The French boy was giggling. "The bastards," Hall said.

"Sit here and order a Cuba Libre for me," Duarte said. "I'm going to phone for a car."

Now that the action had begun, Hall felt better. The tension had been broken. Hands were starting to be shown. Now the moves would come more quickly, he thought, and they would be more definite in form. Diverse facts would synthesize, and when the letter came from Havana, perhaps the whole thing would start to form one pattern.

"We can't talk here," Duarte said. "Let's have a drink and then, when my car comes, we'll go to my house. I rented a place on the beach."

"Sorry, boy. That's out tonight. Have to stick around the hotel."

"But we should talk, Mateo."

"I'll have breakfast with you at your house. Do you eat in?"

"Sometimes. We'll eat in tomorrow morning."

"Eight o'clock too early?"

"No. I'll get you out of bed, Felipe. Well, here's to Mexico!"

Chapter seven

It was not quite six when the phone next to Hall's bed rang and a tired Souza said, "Your driver is on the way up to your room, Señor."

Hall admitted Pepe a moment later. "What is it?" he asked. Unshaven, heavy-eyed, the big Asturiano seemed thoroughly upset.

"*Nada*," he said. "It is just time." He went to the window, locked the shutters, and held his finger to his lips. With his other hand, he first pointed to Ansaldo's room and then to his ear.

"Oh," Hall said, raising his voice. "Thank you for waking me. Sit down and have a smoke while I dress." He gave Pepe a pencil and a sheet of paper.

Pepe wrote: "The Englishman Fielding was killed three hours ago."

"How?" Hall asked.

The driver vigorously pointed to the street. "You will miss your train, Señor," he said.

"I'll hurry." Hall dressed quickly, shaved, and went downstairs with Pepe. They got into the car and Pepe headed in the direction of the railroad terminal.

"Fielding was run down by an automobile near his house," Pepe said.

"Was it a Rolls-Royce?"

"I don't know. There was only one witness. An old woman. She said that he was walking across the street and the automobile just hit him and kept on going. She said it looked as if he walked into the car."

"Who is the old woman?"

"A farmer's wife. She was on her way to the market with a wagon of meal."

"Didn't she describe the car?"

"I don't think so, Mateo. The Englishman died instantly. He had a gun in his pocket when they found him. Didn't have a chance to use it against his murderers."

"Where are we going now?"

"No place. I just pointed our noses toward the railroad for the benefit of anyone watching us from the hotel."

"Oh. I have an appointment at the beach at eight o'clock. Let's have some coffee until we're ready to go."

Pepe drove to a café near the Transport Union building. They found a table in the back of the place. "Do you know any of the Englishman's friends?" Hall asked.

"Not many."

"Did you know his friend Harrington?"

The name left Pepe cold. He was certain that he had never met Harrington or heard the name mentioned. Nor did he know anything about Fielding's employees. "His secretary is a middle-aged Hermanita. She lives alone with a parrot and minds her own business. I knew a man who was her lover once, but that was fifteen years ago."

"Do you know much about Felipe Duarte?" Hall asked.

"Sure. But why?"

"I'm to meet him at eight this morning."

Pepe looked at the clock. "Then let's go," he said. "Sometimes Duarte is like a crazy man, but he is a good friend."

"Does he know you?"

"We have met many times. Did you know him in Spain?"

They went to the car, and Hall told Pepe about some of Duarte's legendary feats in the war against the fascists. He was in the midst of a story about the Ebro retreat when they reached Duarte's cottage.

Duarte came to the door wearing a towel around his middle. "So you got up?" he laughed. "And you got Pepe up, too! Come in and fill your guts." He led them through the small living room, put on a pair of shorts and mismated huaraches.

"We'll all eat in the kitchen," he said. "I'll bet you forgot that I'm a wonderful cook, Mateo." He served a twelve-egg omelet whose pungent fires brought tears to Hall's eyes.

"This is really going to kill me," Hall said.

"The lousy gringo," Duarte said to Pepe. "He's got a gringo stomach."

Pepe defended Hall loyally. After he had his coffee, he rubbed his bristling beard and asked Duarte if he had a razor that could cut through steel wire. Duarte took him to the bathroom.

"Shave and bathe while I talk to Mateo," he said.

When they were alone, Hall asked him if he knew Fielding. "Sure, I do. He's the one English planter in South America who knows that the world is round."

"He's dead." Hall told Duarte all that he knew about Fielding's death, and what little he knew about Fielding himself. Duarte listened in stunned silence.

"And you still think that attempt on you last night was a bluff?" he asked when Hall was done.

"I'm more convinced than ever that it was a bluff. But whoever drove that car knew that an hour later Fielding was going to be killed by a car. And I'll bet that it was not the same car that made a pass at us last night."

"Then you're hiding something from me, Mateo."

"The hell I am. I'm going to tell you everything I know. Just give me a chance. Do you know Juan Antonio Martinez?"

"The young teacher?"

Hall told Duarte about Juan Antonio's phone call to *Mundo Obrero* and how it reached the Cross and the Sword in a matter of minutes. "Fernandez and his boy friends told me about the phone call at the Embassy last night. They warned me that it meant the Reds were going to prepare an attempt on my life. Now my cue is to run to them for help because of the Rolls-Royce in the Plaza."

"Will you go through with it?"

"Tomorrow. But I don't like the idea. They don't act as if they knew about my record in Spain. But it's crazy to think they're going to remain in the dark."

"What are you doing today?"

"I'm catching the eleven o'clock train to Juarez. I have an idea I'll come back with a pretty good line on the Cross and Sword camarilla."

Duarte laughed. "I have an idea you'll come back from Juarez with something else," he said.

"Not today, Felipe. I'd like to, but not today."

"She's a good piece."

"Forget it. I'm after stronger meat today."

"Like that nurse with the red hair?"

"I'm serious, Felipe. And we haven't got much time. Listen, did you ever hear of a guy named Harrington? Fielding said he was his associate, and that he knew a lot about the Falange at the waterfront."

The name meant nothing to Duarte. "But then, I didn't know Fielding too well. I've only talked to him once; he wanted to find out if I had known his son."

"Well, you've got to find Harrington, if he exists," Hall said. "And one other thing: Fielding had dinner with the new British Naval Intelligence officer for this port the night before last."

"Commander New?"

"That's the guy. You've got to see New this morning. Better send a messenger to the British Embassy with a sealed note. Don't use the phone."

"What do I say in the note?"

"Anything. The idea is that you've got to stop the British Embassy from raising a stink about Fielding for at least a week. Let the Falange think the British Embassy accepts the police verdict on Fielding's death. In the paper this morning the police described it as an unfortunate accident."

"Some accident!"

"Act as if you know plenty when you see New. You'd better have him visit you, Felipe. Tell him that in a week you'll have the true facts."

"Will I?"

"I don't know. Well, tell him you think you'll have the full facts. And find out all you can about Harrington, if New knows anything. See if you can arrange for me to meet Harrington."

"I understand." Duarte looked at his watch and shouted to Pepe to get out of the bathroom. "We've got to get started," he said to Hall. "If I'm to stop Commander New, I'd better not lose any more time."

"Good. Where will you be tonight at about nine? That's when the return train gets in."

"Call me right here. What name will you use? Pedro?"

"Pedro is O.K."

"If we have to meet tonight, I'll tell Pepe where we can do it. I'd better tell him now. Have some more coffee while I dress, *chico*. And don't worry." Duarte went upstairs.

Hall endorsed a hundred-dollar money order and ran after Duarte. "One other favor, Felipe. Ride to town with Pepe and me, and after I get out at the railroad station, please force that Asturian mule to accept this check. He's refused to take a cent from me since I'm in town—and I found out how much gasoline is selling for in San Hermano."

The train to Juarez was on the line to the north which had been built in Segura's time. The graft which had gone in to the building of the road was

now scattered over the far corners of the earth. Somewhere in Paris, one of the chief contractors still lived on his share of the booty, paying varying fees to the Nazis for butter and woolens. In New York, one of Segura's army of illegitimate sons was studying medicine on the proceeds of some shares in the line which had belonged to his mother. Estates whose rolling lands touched the rails on either side belonged to old Seguristas who had bought the lands with the money they had managed to steal from the project. The money was gone, but the steel cars the builders had bought in Indiana and Pennsylvania remained. It was still a good railroad, and even though it now belonged to the government, the trains not only ran on time but were much cleaner and charged lower fares than before.

Hall watched the green countryside until the rolling landscape and the rhythm of the wheels made him drowsy. He turned away from the window, opened his newspaper to stay awake. The news was vague. The bulletin from the Presidencia stated simply that Ansaldo had spent four hours with Tabio but had issued no verdict. Those were exactly the words, "no verdict," and reading them again Hall grew angry. He tried to figure out some foolproof way of cabling to Havana, but the censorship hazards were too great.

The inside pages had little of interest. Bits of international and Washington news. A feature story from Mexico City on the great religious revival that was sweeping Mexico and threatening the Marxist forces in the government. This was in *El Imparcial,* and Hall recognized the byline of the author, a prominent lieutenant of the Mexican fascist leader, Gomez Morin. There was a full page of local society items, dry stuff about weddings, dinners, parties, the goings and comings of the smart set. And the inevitable puff story, this one about the "great and noted lawyer" Benito Sanchez, about whom no one had ever heard a thing and who would sink back into obscurity until he paid for another personality feature at so much per

column, cash on the barrel. Hall forced himself through this flowery account of the lawyer's ancestry, wit, humanitarianism, piety, fertility, education, patriotism, skill in court, and kindness to his mother. Try as he could, the hack who wrote this story had not been able to completely fill three columns, the accepted length for such compositions. The bottom of the third column had therefore been filled with a stock item in small type: "Ships Arriving and Leaving Today and Tomorrow."

Mechanically, Hall read the shipping notes. The *Drottning-holm* was in port. The *Estrella de Santiago* was returning to Havana. Tomorrow, the *Marques de Avillar* was due from Barcelona. Tomorrow the *Ouro Preto* was sailing back to Lisbon. The *City of Seattle* was now six days overdue; U. S. Lines, Inc., had no explanation. Mails for the *Ouro Preto* closed at midnight.

Hall turned the page and stopped. The rustle of the paper struck a hidden chord in his mind. He turned back to the shipping news, read it carefully. The *Marques de Avillar* became as great as the *Normandie* and the *Queen Mary* rolled into one. He recalled the conversation he had overheard between Ansaldo and Marina. *Find out if they came today.... Too dangerous to come by Clipper.* But by Spanish boat?

He went back to the conversation. Yes, that was exactly the way they talked. And after the talking came the rustling of a paper. Not evidence, of course, and even in wartime you couldn't shoot two bastards like them unless you knew more. But was it worth following up? Perhaps Margaret Skidmore would be able to supply another piece of the jigsaw. She had a sharp tongue, and this meant a sharp head. Sharp and tough, and Felipe was probably right about her other value, but if it happened at all it would have to happen when this mess was cleared up.

The train pulled into Juarez on time. Hall got off and gaped at the station. It was covered from ground to roof with the blazing "tiger vines" whose orange orchid-shaped flowers were the unofficial flag of the country. Margaret was waiting for Hall under the station shed. "Hi," she shouted, "have a nice trip?"

"Swell. Let me look at you under the sunlight." In a tennis eye shade, green sports dress, and rope-soled *zapatos* she seemed to be more of a woman than she was in evening clothes.

"Well?"

"You'll do," he laughed. "It's just that evening clothes rarely reveal more than the size of a woman's shopping budget."

Margaret laughed easily. "You mean that you can't tell whether a girl in an evening gown has knock knees or a wooden leg. I have neither. There's my car. That little jalopy."

"How far is your place from the station?" Hall asked.

"It starts right here." Margaret pointed to a green field to the left of the road. "I have four thousand acres between the tracks and the main house, and then there's a lot of scrub forest behind the house that belongs to me."

"All yours?"

The car was raising great clouds of dust on the dry dirt road. "Uh huh. The money came from Mother's side of the family. Since she died, I more or less keep the old man in embassies. She left him only cigarette money." She was very cold and matter of fact about it.

"I see," he said.

"Don't be so shocked. I always talk the way I feel. The old man's a stuffed shirt and you know it. If he hadn't married money the best he'd get out of life would be a career as a floor-walker in Macy's. No, he's too aristocratic for Macy's. In Wanamaker's Philadelphia store. Do me a favor. There's a big heavy ledger in the side door pocket. Take it out and put it on my lap. No, with the binding facing the radiator. Thanks."

"What's it for?"

She opened the front ventilator in the cowl. The gush of wind which poured in lifted her skirt to the edge of the book. "See?" she said. "Keeps my skirt from blowing over my head when I open the vent."

Hall glanced at her bare legs. "Some day you'll catch cold," he smiled. "What have you got planted on your land? Looks to me like soy."

"It is soy. Three thousand acres."

"That makes you a farmer."

"The hell it does. That makes me an Ambassador's daughter. The Rockefeller committee planted it, with local help, of course. It's part of a demonstration project. The idea is to teach them how to grow new crops so that after the war Detroit can keep the home price on soy down by importing just enough soy to keep it growing in South America. All I did was donate my land."

"What happens to the proceeds when you sell the crop?"

"Oh, I suppose the old man will make a big show of donating the proceeds to the Red Cross in San Hermano."

"That the house?"

"That's my hideaway. The old man can't come out here. He's violently allergic to soy beans."

She started to talk about the soy-bean project and the by-products of its crop. The words flowed without effort. She knew the facts, the theories, the statistics, the chemistry of the soy-bean industry as well as she knew the road to her house. She discussed them as she might yesterday's weather, or a neighbor's dog. I don't give a damn about soy beans, she seemed to be saying, I just know about them because I was roped in to lend my land and I'll be damned if I'll give my land without knowing why.

"Well, that's enough talk about soy, I guess," she said when she turned off the road to the lane leading to her house.

"I don't imagine there's anything else to know about it," Hall said.

"Here we are, Matt."

"Say, it is a nice house."

"Hollow tile and stucco. I found the plans in an old issue of *House and Garden*."

"I'll be damned. It looks as Spanish as the Cathedral."

"Oh, it should," Margaret said. "It's supposed to be an authentic New Mexican ranch house. Let's go in and get a drink."

Like the railroad station, the house was also covered with tiger vines. It was built around a flagstone patio. Leaded glass doors opened from the patio to the two-story-high beamed living room, the kitchen, and the back corridor. This corridor opened on both the living room and the stairs to the upstairs quarters. Inside, the living room was furnished like a quality dude ranch—hickory and raw-hide furniture, Mexican *serapes* and dress sombreros hanging on the walls and over the large stone fireplace, a Western plank bar

with a battered spittoon at the rail and a lithograph of the Anheuser-Busch Indians scalping General Custer. The saloon art classic, of course, hung in a yellow oak frame behind the bar.

"Holy God," Hall said, "when I was a kid this litho used to give me nightmares. It used to hang in the dirty window of Holbein's saloon on West Third Street in Cleveland—that's my home town—and every time I passed it I used to see more gore pouring down old Custer's throat."

Margaret took off her eye shade and went behind the bar. "A drink should drive away that terrible memory," she said. "Scotch?"

"Black rum, if you have it."

"Coming right up. That's a pirate's drink, though. Although when you come right down to it, you do look like a freebooter."

Hall had his foot on the bar. "Better smile when you say that, Pard," he said.

She smiled out of the side of her mouth and laughed. "Here's to Captain Kidd," she said, raising her Scotch.

"This is good rum."

"Wait. I can improve it." She reached below the bar for a small wooden platter and a lemon. Deftly, she carved off a slice of thick skin, twisted it above an empty glass, dropped the peel into the glass and covered it with rum. "Try it this way."

"It is good. So you're a bartender, too!"

Margaret refilled her own glass and sat down on the edge of a wheeled settee. "Right now I'm farmer, bartender, chambermaid and cook. If you must know, outside of the dogs in the yard and the horses in the shed, we're

the only living things within five miles. All my help is in the next town celebrating some saint's day or something."

"You'll manage to survive," Hall smiled.

"I'm a pretty self-sufficient lady," she said. "Or hadn't you noticed?"

"I'm not blind."

"Hungry?"

"I could eat. What's cooking?"

"Sandwiches. Cold beef sandwiches and coffee. And if you're nice you can have some *montecado à la* Skidmore."

"Real ice cream?"

"No. But a reasonable facsimile. Let's go to the kitchen. You can help me carry the tray and stuff."

They ate at the monastery table in the living room. Margaret told Hall the story of how she had supervised the building of the house and then ordered her furniture from a dozen different stores between Houston and San Hermano. She spoke of plumbing and artesian wells and wiring systems with the same detailed knowledge she had displayed of soy-bean culture.

"Do you know San Hermano politics as well as you know soy beans and housing?" he asked.

"Better," she smiled. "I'm closer to it. But we've got plenty of time to talk about San Hermano. I thought we'd saddle up two horses and go for a ride in the backwoods. Do you ride?"

"After a fashion. I spent a summer vacation as a ranch hand in Wyoming once."

Margaret concentrated on Hall's feet for a minute. "Oh, I can fix you up with boots and breeches. You sit here and I'll go on up, change, and find you riding things. Just turn on a radio and relax or fix yourself a drink while I'm changing."

She went upstairs to her room. Hall lit his pipe, turned on the radio. He found a program of Mexican marimba music.

"That's swell," Margaret shouted through the open transom of her door.

He could hear the water splashing into the bath upstairs. He lay back and closed his eyes, the radio keeping him awake. In San Hermano, the announcer looked at the studio clock, gave the station's call letters, and read another "no change" bulletin on the health of the President.

"Matt ..."

"Ready so soon?"

"Come on up to my room. It's the third door to the left of the stairs."

"Sure."

"Would you shut off the radio, too?"

He flipped the radio switch and climbed the stairs to the upper landing. Margaret's door was slightly ajar. "That you, Matt?"

"The old pirate himself." He pushed the door open.

Margaret was standing near her bed, freshly bathed and completely naked. "I changed my mind," she said, thickly.

"Margaret ..."

"No. Don't talk." She had her arms around him, her mouth against his lips. The pine salts of her bath and the sharp perfume in her hair and behind her ears choked in Hall's throat.

"You're biting my lips," she said.

He picked her up and carried her to the bed while she undid the buttons of his shirt with closed eyes and steady fingers. "I knew you were a pirate," she smiled.

Hall kicked his shoes off, drew the blinds.

"Are you surprised?" she asked.

He locked the door and joined Margaret. "Don't talk," he said. "You kiss too well to talk in bed."

There was the pine scent and the perfume and the savage odor of whisky on hot breath and then there was the faint saline taste of blood on his tongue and the rigid breasts of the girl pressed against his bare skin and she was trying to gasp an insane gibberish of love words and sex words and sounds that were not words at all. He shut off the gibberish with his hard mouth and then he started to lose himself in the devils that were coursing through his blood and the sharp pain of her nails digging fitfully into the back of his shoulders and the taut smoothness of her writhing thighs. For a searing moment the emptiness and the agonies of the past four years rose to the surface like a two-edged razor in his brain, rose slashing wildly to torture and torment, and then, as suddenly, they were lost in the devils and the blood and the white, pine-scented thighs of the girl and Hall stopped thinking and gave himself completely to the one, to the only one, to the only thing that could answer the devils and the pain and the moment.

Then she lay at his side, limp, whispering, "God, oh my God, oh my God," and smiling at him with tear-filled eyes.

"Hello."

"Was I good? Was I, Matt?"

And he realized how adept she actually was at it. Sex was a soy bean, something you used, developed, exploited. "You're very good at this sort of thing," he said, "and you know it."

"I'm not always good," she said. "This is one thing that takes two for perfection. Like now." She reached into the drawer of the night table. "Cigarette?"

"No."

"Light mine for me, darling. I'm half dead."

She smoked her cigarette in happy, satisfied silence, moving closer to Hall and putting her free arm under his neck. Then, with an abrupt movement, she ground the butt into the ash tray and kissed the scar on Hall's chin. "Who cut you up?" she asked. "Some Frenchwoman's husband?" But before he could answer she was lying on his chest with her open mouth pressing heavily against his lips.

This time he could ignore the devils until the hot furies that drove the girl finally moved him to respond. But what had earlier been an experience which reached in and shook the guts was now a performance—overture, theme, variations, theme and soaring climax and maybe it was what she wanted and maybe it wasn't but baby that's the best you get this trip. When it was done she seemed happy enough. She smoked another cigarette and then she fell into a light sleep, her head nuzzling under his arm pit like a puppy's.

Hall lay watching the sun rays as they stretched between the shuttered windows and the smoothness of Margaret's glistening back.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked when she awoke.

"Really want to know?"

"Uh huh."

"About a girl from Ohio."

"Your wife?"

"No. Just a girl I know. I've been wondering if she has freckles on her back."

"Well, anyway, you're frank."

"When are you going back to San Hermano?"

"Tonight. I'll drive you back. I think we should get ready. The help might start straggling back in an hour or so." She kissed him tenderly, then savagely. "No, but this is silly," she said. "We'll get caught." She rolled away and got out of bed.

Later in the living room, Margaret made two rum drinks. She had changed her tennis dress for a dark suit, and her fingers now carried three elaborate rings. "Now I'm dressed for town again," she laughed. "Without my rings I'd feel naked." One of them was a wedding ring; Hall asked no questions about it.

"Are you still interested in San Hermano politics?" Margaret asked.

"Sort of."

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything. Fernandez and his friends had one set of ideas. I guess you know what they are. The Tabio crowd speaks differently. What's the

lowdown?"

Margaret went to the wide window of the room. "Look," she said, "see all that land between the fence and the top of that hill? I've got some of it in soy and the rest is just lying fallow. What do you think it's worth?"

"I couldn't say."

"Neither can anyone else. That all depends on the politics down here."

"That's true back home too, isn't it?"

"In a way, yes." She poured another drink for herself and sat down on the settee. "I'll let you in on a secret, Matt. I'll tell you how I came to buy this place. Sit down. It's a long story. And it leads right into the thing you're interested in."

"When did you get it?"

"Two years ago. A young mining engineer in San Hermano met me at a party given at the University. He wanted me to put him in touch with an American financing outfit. On a field trip he had undertaken as a student, the young engineer inadvertently stumbled across a treasure in manganese. The deposits lay in an area he alone could reveal, and for a consideration and a share in the profits, he was willing to lead the right parties to the site of his discovery.

"I became the right party," Margaret said. "The soy is growing over a fortune in manganese."

"What happened to the young engineer?"

"He's in the States. I got him a scholarship in a good mining school. When he gets out, he'll be able to run the works down here."

"You don't miss a trick, do you?"

"Darling," she laughed, "my grandfather didn't come up from a plow on his muscles alone. But why don't you ask me why I'm not mining my manganese now?"

"I suppose that's where the politics comes in," he said.

"Now you're catching on. You see, Matt, anyone who didn't know the score down here might start mining like mad. There's a war on, the Germans have grabbed most of Russia's manganese fields, and Russia had a practical corner on the world's manganese supply. It's almost worth its weight in platinum today."

"Then why in the hell don't you cash in?"

"Because I intend to live for a long time after the war, darling. And I'd like something for my old age. Not inflation-swelled war dollars, but real hard money. That's where the politics comes in, Matt. It costs like hell to start a mine. I'd have to dip into my reserves to get it started, or get partners and let them pay for the works. But they wouldn't do it for nothing. They'd wind up with an unhealthy share of the profits. This is my baby, and under certain circumstances I can run it by myself and make money at it. But those circumstances are determined by the politics here."

"By that," Hall said, "I take it you mean Tabio's politics?"

Margaret was not smiling now. Her eyes had narrowed down to sharp slits, and although she talked as fluently about the mine and Tabio as she had earlier discussed soy beans, her voice had taken on a sharp, metallic edge. "I most certainly do," she said.

"Then you agree with Fernandez and the Cross and Sword crowd?"

"Now don't tell me," she said, wearily, "that they are all a bunch of dirty fascists."

"I'm not telling you a thing. I'm here to get the lowdown, not to hang labels on everyone in San Hermano."

"Thank God for that," she said. "I can give you the lowdown, if you really want it."

"That's what I'm here for."

"I'm so sick of these smart-aleck pundits who are so quick to hang the fascist label on everything they don't like," Margaret said. "I'm not afraid of labels. I'm only interested in the facts. I'm interested in my manganese operation. I'm interested in protecting what I have. And I'll fight against anyone who tries to steal what's rightfully mine."

"You've been threatened?"

"Not directly. That's the hell of it. If not for me, or someone else with as much money to risk as I'm risking, this manganese would be useless to everyone. But I'm not going to sink a fortune into the mine only to have the cream taken away from me."

"By Tabio?"

A slight smile touched Margaret's lips. "Not exactly," she said. "I'm a little more rational than Fernandez and his friends. It's not Tabio I'm afraid of, darling. It's the thing he's started. You don't open a few thousand schools all over a backward country and then expect the people to remain the same. It's not only the kids who go to these schools; grown-ups pack the same school houses every night. People don't want things they don't know about. But when they go to school they start learning about a million things they'd like to have—and none of these are free. They begin to want modern houses and

radios and refrigerators and pianos—you have no idea what they begin to want, Matt!

"The schools are only the beginning. Once the miners learn how to read and write, the unions come along and flood them with printed propaganda about higher wages. They tell the miners that higher wages mean higher standards of living."

"Don't they?" Hall asked.

"Not for the mine owners, dear," she said. "Higher wages mean lower profits. And when you run a mine, the idea is to keep the profits up. That's where the politics come in, Matt. You don't pass laws—as the Popular Front has—forcing employers to bargain with the unions without making the unions so powerful that they can and do elect whole blocs of union deputies and senators. And then these blocs push through laws on hospitalization and social security and death benefits that cut into a mine owner's profits nearly as much as the wage increases.

"In other words, Matt, it all boils down to dollars and cents. Tabio and his ideas are great vote-catchers—but the costs are enormous. And these costs don't come out of the pockets of the people who vote for the Popular Front candidates."

Hall watched her in fascination as she spoke. This was no mystic Pilar Primo de Rivera, he thought, no hyper-thyroid hysteric falling on her knees in the cathedral and then rushing out with blood in her eyes and emptying a Mauser full of bullets into the warm bodies of housewives shopping in the Madrid slums. Margaret's voice had not risen by one note. Her hands were calm, she was still relaxed in the settee. If not for the hard sharpness of her voice now, she might still be discussing soy-bean culture or anything else as remote from her true interests.

"Fernandez and the Cross and Sword crowd might be hysterical," Margaret said, "but they are on the right track. The government has to change quickly, or it will be too late for all of us. The Cross and Sword crowd aren't really natives, you know. They're Spaniards. They got the scare of their lives when Tabio's Spanish counterparts took over in Spain."

"But why? They live here. Spain is an ocean away."

"Money has a way of crossing oceans," Margaret said. "They all had plenty invested in Spain. If Franco hadn't come along, Vardieno and Davila and Quinones and a lot of other men you haven't met would have been wiped out."

"Isn't Franco a fascist?"

"Labels don't mean a thing. I think democracy is the phoniest label in the world, Matt. When it means a stable government, like we used to have back home before the New Deal, I'm for it. But when it means the first step on the road to collectivism, I'll take any Franco who comes along to put an end to it. That goes for the Cross and Sword crowd, too. Or am I all wrong?"

Hall laughed, softly. "That's a rhetorical question," he said. "Let's skip the rhetoric. Then things are really bad down here, aren't they?"

"They couldn't be much worse. I know it sounds harsh, but I think the best thing Tabio could do for his country would be to die. With Gamburdo in the Presidencia, you'd see a return to something resembling sanity down here. He has a very sound approach."

"But wouldn't he be too late? What could he do about the school system, for instance?"

"The Cross and Sword crowd want the schools closed down at once. They want education returned to the Church. But Gamburdo is a good politician,"

Margaret said. "He'd keep the schools open, but he'll clean out the Ministry of Education from the very top down to the personnel of the village schools. He'll simply turn it over to the Jesuits. They won't have to open their own parochial schools; they'll control Tabio's."

"Have they enough teachers?"

"Gamburdo told me that if they need teachers they'll import them from Spain."

"How about the labor laws?"

"A law is no better than its enforcement. That's what I learned in law school and it still goes. Can you imagine what would happen to the Wagner Act if Hoover were back in the White House?"

"You don't need too much of an imagination to figure that one out," Hall said.

"Of course," Margaret said, "Gamburdo will need more finesse than a Hoover." There was the little matter of the arms everyone knew were in the hands of the miners in the north. There was also the still painful memory of the one-day general strike called by the transport workers and the longshoremen when the Supreme Court delayed its decision on the validity of the Tabio labor codes. Gamburdo, she explained, would have to plan his acts like a military strategist. "Because unless he does, he will need a military strategist to pull him out of the hole."

"You don't mean a civil war?"

That was exactly what Margaret did mean. But Gamburdo had a plan for averting such a war, or, if it had to come, to guarantee the victory for the forces of sound government when the issue was drawn. He would begin gradually by restoring to their army commissions the old officers trained in

Segura's military college. This he would do before attempting to circumvent the labor laws. "Then, when the war ends in Europe, a lot of good professional military leaders will be out of jobs," she said. "Gamburdo plans to give them jobs."

"How about the troops? Will they be loyal to the new order?"

Gamburdo had provided for this, too. The army would have the best of everything; it would be made more attractive than life as a miner or a soybean cultivator. "But a boy will have to have the O.K. of his priest before he will be taken in. And what a priest learns at confession is nothing to be ignored. The Church will keep the unreliable elements out of the army." Once he had an army, Gamburdo would then be ready to restore sound government in the nation.

"He's a clever guy," Hall said. "I had a hunch he was the coming strong man on the continent when I applied for an interview."

Margaret thought that this was very funny. "Don't be a child," she laughed. "He won't admit to anything like this for publication."

"That doesn't matter. What counts in my business is that I'll be on record as the first American to interview him, and that I'll get the credit for discovering him before his name is a household word."

"Right now all he'll talk is platitudes. But you might get him to talk off the record. He's gotten around to telling me things. And stop looking at your watch. I'll lock up and we can start back to town at once. You'll be back in plenty of time to sleep with her tonight."

"With whom?"

"Whoever you have that date with. I know I should be nasty about it. But I never demanded fidelity and I always hated men who demanded it of me.

That's the way we both are, darling, and as long as it goes off as good as it did upstairs today we can expect to do it often." She left the settee, walked over to Hall's chair, and kissed his ear. He slapped her trim buttocks, shouted, "Cut it out!"

"Let's get going," she said. "Time's a-wasting."

Hall thought, as Margaret drove him back to San Hermano, that Pepe Delgado would have approved of her skill as a driver just as much as he would disapprove of her politics. The ledger on her lap, she pushed the roadster through hairpin curves and back-country roads with a confidence as cold as her reasoning about her manganese properties.

"I'll walk to my hotel from the Embassy," he said, when they reached the suburbs of San Hermano. "I could stand a little walk."

"So you're meeting her in the lobby," Margaret laughed. She kissed him fondly when she stopped the car near the Embassy. "Darling," she said, "don't ask me to the Bolivar. But I have to go back to the farm in a few days. I'll let you know ahead of time, and we can have a night together."

"Call me," Hall said. "Or I'll be calling you."

An hour later he met Duarte in the home of one of the secretaries of the Cuban Embassy. The Mexican had borrowed the home for the evening. "We have at least two hours to talk here," Duarte told Hall. "My friend is at the cinema."

Duarte opened two bottles of cold beer, set one before Hall. He took a long look at Hall and burst into laughter. "Did she give you any information, Mateo?"

"You bastard," Hall said.

Felipe Duarte doubled over with laughter. "Mateo the Detective!" he chortled.

"O.K.," Hall laughed. "So I was raped."

"Raped is the right word, *chico*."

"When did she take you into her bed, Felipe?"

"Long ago. My first week in San Hermano. Then once more after that. I gave way for an American aviator who came here to sell planes to the government. He was succeeded in a week by two men, a local *señorito* named Madariaga and the First Secretary of the French Embassy. After that I just stopped noticing."

"Who is her husband?"

"She has no husband."

"She was wearing a wedding ring, Felipe."

"That's a new development. I never heard of her having a ring or a husband."

"She's a very clever girl, Felipe. And a confirmed fascist."

"She's only a rich *puta*, Mateo. The hell with her."

"She might be useful, Felipe. What happened to you today? Did you learn anything?"

Duarte shrugged his shoulders. He had little real information. "I saw Commander New. He looked down his nose at me during our whole interview, and then, like an English trader, he started to bargain with me. About the week, I mean. He said that a week was too long. He would only

give me three days. Then—if I gave him no more information than you got from the *puta* today, he goes to the police."

"That's not so good."

"Who knows? The counsellor of the British Embassy spent the whole day going through Fielding's files with the widow. If they found those reports you saw that night, maybe the Intelligence officer will give us that full week."

"Did you find out anything about Harrington?"

"Commander New never heard of him, he says. Then I thought I would make a real surprise for you. Souza arranged with some smart boys to search Ansaldo's room with a fine comb. But they combed not a louse, Mateo. They found nothing of interest except that Ansaldo's *maricón* is a morphine addict."

Hall lit a black cigar from the Cuban's private collection. "Where the hell is my letter from Havana?" he said.

"Take it easy, *chico*." Duarte opened a fresh bottle of beer for his friend.

"I'll be all right," Hall said. "I won't explode tonight."

Duarte recalled an earlier occasion in a Madrid hospital, when a phone call from the Paris office of the AP had made Hall lose his head. "To my dying day," he told Hall, "I'll never forget those curses that shot out of your guts."

"Don't remind me," Hall said. "I get sick when I think of it again. That was the time they held up my story on Guadalajara because they weren't satisfied that I had definite proof that the troops captured by the Republic were Italian regulars."

The Mexican laughed. It was a laugh made bitter by the silver plate in his skull. It covered an injury he had suffered in fighting the Italian regulars at Guadalajara.

Hall understood. "There are too many bastards in this world," he said. "I wish curses alone could stop them. But we've got work to do. Pepe didn't bring me here. He was busy on something else. I'll have to use your driver. Have him drive me to some decent restaurant. I wish you'd come along too."

"Why didn't you tell me you're hungry?"

"I forgot. But there's one thing your driver can do for us. Do you know where the Compañía Transatlántica Española pier is located? Good. Just have him drive very slowly past the pier on the way. I want to look it over."

Chapter eight

Shortly after eight in the morning, Hall sat down at a table in a waterfront café and ordered coffee and rolls. It was a small place with a zinc bar in one corner, patronized largely by longshoremen and petty customs officials. Hall chose a table which gave him a good view of the Compañía Transatlántica Española dock diagonally across the street.

On the dock there were the unmistakeable signs that the *Marques de Avillar* was coming in on time. Minor customs officials in their blue uniforms stood around in small, important looking knots, their hands filled with papers and bundles of official forms. The passenger gangplank, with the line's name splashed on its canvas sides in crimson and gold letters, had been hauled on to the pier and lay waiting like a rigid, outstretched hand for the incoming ship. A row of motley cabs were lined up facing the pier, their drivers dozing or reading the morning papers behind their wheels as they waited for the business from the ship. Pepe was not only one of these drivers, but through the transport union he had arranged to fill the cab line with trustworthy anti-fascist drivers.

Hall could see Pepe slouched behind the wheel of the LaSalle, his white cap pushed way to the back of his massive head. The cab strategy was Pepe's inspiration. It did away with the necessity of following any of the cabs which picked up passengers whose moves might be of interest to Hall. As a further precaution, Souza had arranged through members of his union to get an instant line on any of the *Marques de Avillar* passengers who registered at a San Hermano hotel that day.

A letter written in Spanish with purple ink in a fine, delicate woman's hand lay on the metal table between the butter pat and the carafe of water. Hall

read it again as he stirred his coffee.

"Beloved Mateo," the letter began, and Hall chuckled at Santiago's current dodge, "Why did you leave me so suddenly without even giving me a chance to explain? It is you and you alone whom I love, *cariño*, and any thoughts that you have to the contrary you must banish from your dear head at this instant. Oh, *cariño*, since you left without a further word I have had no rest, no peace, no sleep...." He skimmed through the first two pages of such protestations, then carefully reread the casual lines: "You are so wrong; it is true that I did know the doctor before, but he was never my lover. I knew him only because he treated dear Carlos, but as a man I hate and detest him. How can I tell you again that you are wrong, that he is an abomination not only in my eyes but also in the eyes of my entire beloved family?"

Nearly three lachrymose pages of love frustrated followed these lines. "And so before I close my letter, I must beg you to drop everything if you love me and fly back to Havana, even if only for a day. Oh, my beloved, if you would only come back to Havana for one day, I am sure that I can resolve all the doubts that are in your mind, Mateo. In the name of all that we have shared, of all that is dear and sacred to us, please fly back to my arms, my love, my kisses—and then you will know!" The letter was signed, "Maria."

Hall folded the letter carefully and put it in his wallet. It told him what he wanted to know about Ansaldo. *He treated dear Carlos—he is an abomination in the eyes of my beloved family.* Santiago's style as a writer of love letters might be a little on the turgid side, but he knew how to make himself clear. And nothing could be clearer than his line on Ansaldo. An abomination. A man who marched with the men who put that fascist bullet through the throat of Uncle Carlos. A bastard.

The dock was growing more crowded. Over the near horizon, a ship pointed its high white face at San Hermano. A long throaty whistle came from its front funnel. Then five short blasts, and in a moment the tugs which had been getting up steam in the harbor were heading out toward the growing ship.

"The *Marques de Avillar*," someone at the bar said. A customs man at a near-by table gulped the remainder of his coffee and bolted to the pier. At the bar, a laughing longshoreman pushed a five-centavo coin into the nickeled red juke box, pressed the "*Bésame*" button. Johnny Rodrigues *y su* Whoopee Kids. Two guitars, a cornet, maracas, sticks and a lugubrious baritone. "*Bésame, bésame mucho* ..." the raucous blaring of a klaxon at the pier ... "*la última vez*" ... again the horn drowned out the words.

Hall looked up at the cabs, ignoring the Whoopee Kids' baritone. A slender young man in a green jacket and cream-colored slacks was standing near the foot of the gangplank. Pepe had taken off his white hat. Hall kept his eyes glued on Pepe until the man in the green jacket turned around, revealing himself as Dr. Marina.

One of the white sedans of the Ministry of Health pulled up at the pier. A doctor and two assistants, the three men wearing the light tan uniform of their service, got out and started to talk to a customs man. He pointed at the white ship being shoved toward the pier by the little tugs.

Hall drank in the tableau, his eyes following Marina's every move, his ears deaf to the next record being played in the juke box.

"*Otro café, señor?*"

"*Si, gracias.*"

But the fresh pot of hot coffee remained untouched. Hall was still watching Marina, but Marina did nothing except shift from foot to foot while he

watched the Spanish liner draw nearer the pier with every turn of the heroic little engines in the two tugs. Hall thought of Jerry. He had missed her again last night, but they had a date for dinner at seven. Doctor had promised her a night off. The messages at the hotel: José Fernandez had phoned, wanted Hall to call him back this morning. O.K., Don José, as soon as I get a good look at the rats Marina is awaiting. I want to hear more about the Red menace hanging over my head. And Souza had an interesting tab on Androtten. The little Dutchman had stayed out all night. Naughty, naughty, Wilhelm, gadding about with *putas* the whole night through and God knows where you are sleeping it off but I guess your little dog is watching to see that no one rolls you for your wad. Or wasn't it a debauch that kept you out all night? Anyway, I'll bet you made your rounds in a Renault you rented from the Phoenix Garage.

The *Marques de Avillar* was being eased into its dock. The cab drivers were waving at the passengers lined up at the rail, and Marina was hopping up and down, shouting and waving a big yellow handkerchief like a banner. The coffee *por favor* has grown cold and *por favor* a pot of hot *por favor* and that's the idea *muchas gracias* and you could have docked the *Marques* in my last yawn. Hall drank a steaming cup of hot coffee.

The gangplank was being wheeled to the ship. There was a knot of ship's officers on the lower deck. They shook hands with the customs men and the medicos who trotted up the gangplank, led them inside to the main salon. Men in blue uniforms with official papers under their arms. A press photographer and a bald roly-poly reporter. They'll be out in a minute, and damn it the morning sun is growing too bright for a pair of tired old eyes, and dipping his napkin in the fresh cold water on the table Hall shoved the cold compress against his heavy eyes.

Two cups of coffee later, the first of the passengers from the *Marques de Avillar* emerged from the salon and walked down the gangplank. Priests—

Hall counted twenty—followed by scrawny stewards with their bags. A few of the priests were old, but most of them were young men who carried themselves erect, their shoulders squared well back, their walk the off-duty walk of the officer on leave from the front. Hall wondered how many of the younger men in clerical collars were really priests and how many of them were used to wearing other uniforms. He remembered the day, less than two months earlier, when the C.T.E. liner *Cabo de Hornos* had docked in Havana and one of General Benitez' men had grown suspicious of two of the Spanish priests on board; a brief discussion of theology had been followed by a thorough search of their luggage, and the young travelers woke up the next morning to find themselves learning theology in the concentration camp on the Isla de Pinas.

Hall was humming "Onward, Christian Soldiers." He watched two young priests get into Pepe's cab and be driven away. The priests, and later four nuns, entered the cabs in pairs. Then, following some customs men, one of the ship's officers came out of the salon with a man in a black suit and a Panama hat. They carried thick portfolios under their arms, and behind them followed a steward with two heavy hand trunks.

There was a blur of green and yellow on the gangplank, and then Marina was on the lower deck, exchanging wild embraces with the ship's officer and the man in the Panama hat. The three men walked down the gangplank, Marina happily bringing up the rear behind the officer. He darted in front of his friends when they reached the pier and signaled one of the cabs. The first cab in line rolled up to the curb and picked them up.

The sun shone into Hall's face. He washed his eyes with cold water, had another cup of coffee. Thick, the air is growing thick and heavy. Hell with it. Olive oil and garlic, coffee, squids, mussels, saffron, mackerel, heat. "*Bésame*" on the juke box again. Don't run off just yet. Look at the watch. Start to get impatient. *Hombre de negocios* waiting for a colleague to work

out a deal. A ton of coffee, three box cars of ore, a round ton of sugar. He's way overdue and you're getting impatient, but you don't leave yet. You don't leave and show the little dog wherever he or his partners are hiding that you had breakfast here this morning just to keep an eye on the *Marques de Avillar*. No, señor, you would not be as careless as the faggot. No, señor, oh no, señor, only the air is getting thicker and somewhere in the kitchen someone is looking at me and laughing I swear it I swear it only I can't help it this is the only face I have.

Soft laughter. Eyes looking in his direction. The now blazing sun. The flags on the mast of the white ship; crimson and gold of Fernando e Isabel, the triangular pennant of the C.T.E., and the mucking five arrows of the Falange floating insolently in the breeze over the heart of a democracy. Don't leave too soon. Look at your watch again and curse the mucking *hombre de negocios* who's holding up your big deal. And what was the name of the C.T.E. radio officer from the *Ciudad de Sevilla* whom poor old Fielding had in his report? Jimenez, Eduardo Jimenez, thank God, my memory for names is like a sponge and what would you say if the ship's officer who got that *abrazo de amor* from the faggot was C.T.E. Radio Officer Jimenez and damn the sun and damn the olive oil on the hot stove chunks of garlic and squid floating in the hot oil and stinking up the thick murky air and it's cooler with the collar open.

Eyes looking at him from the kitchen. Soft laughter. Some joke. Hall is cockeyed on *café con leche* and what's that it's the cup you lug and what's that it's the coffee spilling all over your pants and if those empty-faced bastards in the kitchen don't stop laughing I'll get right up from the floor and put a right cross through their lousy guts. That's just the ticket. Clip them with the old right, like the time in San Sebastian when the gonzo with the feather in his hat made the mistake of getting within range. Watch the

old right, keed, watch the old K.O. sockeroo. Watch it, watch it, don't forget to duck. WATCH IT!

The driver of the rickety four-wheeled bus was thumping time with fat brown fingers on the rim of the heavy wheel. He didn't sing, just sat in his bucket seat with the faded flowered cretonne slip cover (bet you a good dinner his wife sewed it for him when he got the job) and thumped time. The kid with the guitar in the front seat was doing the singing. "Ay, Jalisco, Jalisco." He was a nice kid and drunk as a loon, but sweet and happy drunk. Nothing ugly about the kid. "Ay, Jalisco, Jalisco."

"Why is he singing?" Hall asked.

Behind him, someone in the rear seat answered, "He's happy. His favorite baseball team won the San Hermano tournament."

Hall turned with a start, faced an impassive-looking farmer in blue jeans.

"You were fast asleep, señor," the farmer said.

"Ay, Jalisco, Jalisco." A bad dream. Go back to sleep. Or better yet, wake up and put the light on. But the light was on. The dim yellow lights inside the bus. "Ay, Jalisco, Jalisco." Scots wha hae wi' Wallace fled. Scots wha ... God, no! A new song. No more Jalisco. The farmer came into the town his cheeses ripe his mangoes brown he spied a maiden by her stall she ... God, no!

"Ay, Muchachita, Muchachita." The kid was still in the groove. Four-string chord, six-string chord. *Un beso, un beso! Reflecciones de otros tiempos.* More nice chords. The farmer remembers other times, other maidens who

pursed their lips and gave him *un beso* when he begged. What am I to the farmer and what is he to Hecuba?

"For a *borracho* he sings well."

"Yes, with a skinful he is a virtuoso." The sound of his own words startled Hall. He turned around to the man who had spoken to him. The farmer smiled.

"Pardon me, señor," the farmer smiled, "but tonight you are a little of the virtuoso yourself, no?"

"No." God, no!

"I apologize, señor. You are not well?"

"No. I am well." But where in hell am I? *Ay, muchachita, muchachita.* Cigars in the coat pocket. Broken, all of them. Smashed to shreds. I fell on them. When I fell they were smashed. Cigarettes in the side pocket. Black tobacco, thicker than the cigarettes back home, brown-paper package. *Bock, La Habana.*

"Have you a match?" That's a good one. Felipe's been waiting three years for J. Burton Skidmore to say it. "*Tiene usted un fó'foro?*" Very welcome. Yes, they are Cuban. No, I am not Cuban myself. I dropped the *s* in *fósforo*? I have recently spent some time in Cuba. Yes, Batista is a fine man. Where are you going? Is this your village?

"Good-bye, friend." This from outside, the farmer standing on the dirt road, Hall's gift cigarette glowing in his mouth. A tiny village. Houses, store, the whitewashed village school, a cast-iron statue of San Martin and Bolivar shaking hands, an open-front café, the small church.

"Hello, friend." The kid with the guitar waved at Hall. "When did you get on the bus?"

"I don't remember," Hall said.

"Good. Neither do I. What's your favorite song?"

"*No Pasarán.*"

"I know it," the kid said. "It is a good song." His fingers flew over the strings, found the right chords. Hall joined him in the words of the Spanish Republic's song of resistance.

Night, deep-blue night, the yellow mazdas of the farmers' village way behind them now, and the *gua-gua* rolling down the highway between plowed fields and fields of sugar and nothing in sight but the broad fields.

"Hey, driver!" That was me. I can talk now. I can stand, too. If I grip the tops of the seats I can walk to the front without taking a pratt fall. "Driver, *gua-guero* ..."

"Jump, it's not high, señor ..."

Feet on the ground once more. Black blue soft chill night air. There goes the *gua-gua*. Red tail light bouncing around the bend in the road. No ship. No sun. No garlic broiling in olive oil. Nothing. Get off the road. Get up. Off the road. Get to the fence. Get up, get up, here comes the blackout again, here it comes, watch it, men, this is it.

He remembered the kid with the guitar, the rich voice of the driver. *Jump, it's not high.* It was still night. He was lying in a field, about fifteen yards from the highway. The taste of black earth at his lips had awakened him.

He turned his mouth away from the plowed earth. There was no sense in trying to get up. He knew that much. All in. He was all in. Every bone, every muscle ached. He closed his eyes, sank into a deep dreamless sleep.

Thirst wakened him. It was a thirst that started in his throat, spread to his dry cottony mouth, sank deep into his drying insides. They were drying out, drying out fast. He had to have water, or they would dry up completely, and then he would be dead.

I am now an animal, he thought. I must have animal cunning. I must sense water and then I must get to it. Where things grow there must be water. A stream. A well.

He got to his knees, started to crawl deeper into the plowed field, putting another few yards between himself and the road. He crawled into a clump of weeds. The dew on their leaves brushed against his face. "It's water," he said, and he licked the dew from the weeds. The thirst remained.

Fire. Build a fire and attract a watchman, a farmer, another bus rolling along the deserted road. No, don't build a fire. Cane burns like oil. Remember what poor old Fielding said? No fire. You'll be roasted alive. Find water. It's a sugar field. Must be an irrigation ditch around. Find the ditch.

More ground gained by crawling. Then the sleep of exhaustion, no dreams only sleep until the thirst becomes stronger than the exhaustion and then more crawling until ... God! there is a ditch. Hear it, smell it. Must be water, couldn't be this much mulepiss. Now drink your fill and bathe your face and get your head away from the top of the ditch before you fall asleep again and drown in two inches of it. It has a name. It's water.

This time Hall rolled over on his back when he felt that sleep was overtaking him.

There were a million bugs on the mud walls of the ditch. They crawled on Hall's hands, on his face, and one column of intrepid bugs slithered into his mouth and got caught in his throat and he was sick. He moved away from

the mess, tried to sit up. He could see a mound of rocks near the road. With all his remaining strength, he started to crawl toward the mound.

It took him two hours to negotiate the twenty yards between the ditch and the rocks. He lost count of the number of times he collapsed to his face and fell asleep on the journey. All he knew was that when he woke up, he had to get to the rocks. He could sit on the rocks and wait for a truck or a bus to pass by. Then he could hail the driver.

But when he reached the fence, he saw that the mound was on the other side of the road. Fall asleep in the middle of the road and the next truck that rolls along crushes you like a roach. *Putas y maricones! Maricones y putas!* Blood will run in the streets of the city when I get up, the brown blood, the black blood, the blue blood. *Arriba España* in a pig's eye. You mean *Deutschland Erwache*, señor, and come a little closer, you with the yoke and the five arrows on your cap, come a little closer and get your filthy head bashed in. God, when I get up I'll kill them I'll kill them if these chills ever go away I'll kill them I'll kill all the baby killers when these chills go away oh God look at the baby killers marching through Burgos with the holy men shaking holy water on their lousy heads. Whores and faggots! Faggots and whores! I'm getting up!

He was asleep when the army lorry roared by and then stopped down the road, brakes screeching, rubber biting into macadam.

The sergeant's brandy did no good. Neither did the fresh water they poured on his face, the brandy they rubbed into his wrists. All this they had to tell him later.

He remembered nothing about the lorry. The bus he remembered; the driver, the flowered-cretonne slip cover on the driver's seat, the farmer, joining the kid in *No Pasarán*. He remembered jumping from the bus, crawling for water, giving up the ghost when the bugs crawled into his throat. And the rocks. There was that mound of rocks.

Now there was a narrow bed in a small room. A man's room, obviously a man's room. Desk, lounging chair, worn grass rug. For some reason Fernando Souza was sitting in the lounging chair. Another man was standing near the bed, looking down at Hall, his fingers pressed to Hall's pulse.

"Is that you, Souza?" Hall asked, and the night clerk of the Bolivar left the chair and joined the doctor.

"You will be well now," Souza said.

"The pulse is coming back," the doctor said, to Souza. He let go of Hall's wrist. When he went to the desk, Hall could see the military trousers beneath his white coat.

"Can you talk, Don Mateo?" Souza asked.

"I think so. Where am I? What day is it?"

The doctor went to the door. He held a whispered conversation with a soldier who was waiting on the other side of the door. Then he took Souza's chair. "Such cursing," he laughed. "When they brought you in, Señor Hall, you had no pulse, you had the temperature of cold beer, and your heart had just about three beats left. You were biologically more dead than alive. But I swear, before I gave you the first ampule of adrenalin, the curses were pouring out of your lips like the waves of the ocean. How do you feel now?"

"Very tired."

"Are you hungry?"

"I don't know."

"You'll be able to eat soon. I've been feeding you through a needle for seven hours. How would you like a steak?"

"What time is it?"

"Five o'clock," Souza said. "I've been here with you all afternoon, Don Mateo."

"What's this 'Don' business?"

Souza smiled. "I am glad to see that you are making jokes, *compañero*."

"Where in hell are we?"

Souza and the doctor took turns in telling the story. The soldiers had picked him up in the road some ninety miles from San Hermano. More dead than alive, they put him in the lorry and rushed him to their garrison. There, while the commandant examined his papers, the doctor, Captain Dorado, moved him into the commandant's room and gave him his first shot of adrenalin.

"Was it a heart attack?" Hall asked.

"No," the doctor said. "You were drugged."

Hall listened to the doctor's technical description of the drug which had felled him. He had heard of it before. It worked like an overdose of insulin. Burned up the sugar, then the energy in the body, and then blew the fuses. Something like that, anyway. Another hour without adrenalin and it would have been curtains. That second pot of coffee and the soft laughter in the

kitchen. Damn their eyes, that's where it happened. Then eight hours of lying in the commandant's bed, cursing, sleeping, getting needles of adrenalin, needles of energy, needles of the stuff that makes pulses beat to the right measure.

"Are we tiring you?"

"No, Captain. I'd like something to eat, though."

"I ordered some hot broth."

"Thank you. I'm glad you're here, Fernando."

"The commandant called me," Souza said. "He found your address through Pan American Airways."

"Oh." The letter. It had gone to Pan Am for forwarding. Then it was still safe.

"I will return in a few minutes," the doctor said. "I want to see about your broth."

Souza waited until the doctor was out of the room before he spoke. "Providence was with you," he said. "The commandant here is a Tabio man. He called me at once to find out who you were. Another man might have called your Embassy first."

"Have they called the Embassy yet?"

"Not yet, *compañero*."

"What happened to the men the *maricón* met at the pier?"

"We have them under sharp eyes. They went first to Jorge Davila's home. Then they went to the country. They are in Bocas del Sur at the estate of Gamburdo's brother, the cattle raiser. The *maricón* left them there. He is

now in San Hermano with Ansaldo. They were to be with Don Anibal this afternoon."

"And the girl?"

"With Ansaldo."

"When are you going back to the Bolivar?"

"In an hour."

"Tell her that I telephoned to say that I would be out of the city tonight. I was to see her for dinner. What about the priests from the boat? Are they all really priests?"

"Who knows? Perhaps I shall know more when I return to the city."

"How long will I be on my back?" Hall asked. "Did the doctor say?"

"Not long. You have recovered from the drug, he says. Now you need food and another day's rest."

The doctor returned followed by a soldier who carried a small tray. "Hot soup," he said. "And after the soup, some rich beef stew. But first, some brandy. Three glasses, corporal. We'll drink to the memory of Lazarus." He helped Hall sit up in bed, propped some pillows behind his back. Only when he sat up did Hall notice that a large signed photograph of Anibal Tabio hung over the commandant's desk.

"Let's rather drink to the health of Anibal Tabio," Hall proposed.

Souza and the doctor watched with approval as Hall ate the soup and the stew, and then sipped maté through a silver straw. "He's going to be well in a matter of hours," the doctor said. "Well enough to start cursing again. It is

a shame that I do not know English. But your Spanish curses were enough for me."

"What was I cursing?" Hall asked.

"What didn't you curse, señor? Franco, *putas, maricones*, Hitler, Gamburdo, the Cross and Sword ..."

"God! Who heard me?"

The doctor smiled. "Be tranquil," he said. "Just the commandant and myself, and one of the soldiers. But you don't have to worry about the soldier. He is the son of a miner in the north."

"The soldier," Souza said, "is reliable. I have already seen him."

"You are among friends," the doctor said. "Souza has told us about you."

"I owe my life to you," Hall said.

"From what I have learned," the doctor laughed, "you are not an easy man to kill."

"When can I get out of bed?"

"Tomorrow. That is just as well, señor. The garrison tailor is cleaning your suit now. Would you like more maté?"

"Could I have another brandy?"

"Of course. But then you must sleep."

"I'm tired of sleeping."

"I am prepared for that." The doctor called for the corporal, ordered him to prepare a hypodermic syringe. "You must get some sleep, señor," he said.

In the morning, the doctor pronounced Hall well enough to leave the commandant's bed. Hall's clothes, the suit cleaned and freshly pressed, the shirt washed and ironed, the shoes polished to a glow, were laid out on a chair near the bed. "We do things thoroughly in the army," the doctor said.

"I see."

"The commandant would like to join you for breakfast."

"In the officers' mess?"

"No. Here."

"Please tell him that I would be honored."

"Good. Can you dress yourself?"

"I'm all right, thanks to you, Captain. I feel as if I'd had a week's rest on some quiet beach."

"I'll get the commandant, then. The corporal will show you the way to the washroom. I've laid out my razor and shaving things for you."

It was good to stand on steadied legs again, good to walk erect like a man. The razor had a nice edge. It sliced through the stems of the two-day beard without snagging. For some reason, the efficiency of the razor delighted Hall beyond measure. He studied the results of the shave in the wall mirror, then looked for signs of his illness. Two days were lost, he thought, two days of which he could account for but a few hours. The doctor could fill in most of the second day. The first night was something Hall himself could remember. It was like a bad dream one longs to forget, but he could remember the bus, the field, the ditch, the rock pile. He could remember staggering, crawling, getting sick, passing out and crawling and passing out again. But there were at least ten hours that remained a total blank; that

portion of the day between the time he blacked out in the café near the Spanish line's pier and the moment he became aware of the kid in the bus.

An enlisted man was cleaning up the commandant's room when Hall returned. "The major will be here in five minutes," he told Hall. "And in the meanwhile, he sent you these." He handed Hall a flat tin of American cigarettes.

Hall offered one of the cigarettes to the soldier. He sat down in the leather chair near the desk, looked at the inscription on Tabio's photograph. "To my dear Diego, my comrade in prison and in freedom—Anibal."

"The commandant is a close friend of Don Anibal's," the soldier said. "I think I hear him coming now." The soldier stepped out of the room.

A moment later someone rapped gently on the door.

"Come in," Hall shouted.

The door opened. In the doorway, a man in uniform, his hat carried correctly under his left arm, paused, made a soft salute. "Major Diego Segador," he said. "We are honored to have you as our guest." He shook hands with Hall, sat down in the desk chair facing the portrait of Tabio.

"I am grateful to you for—everything," Hall said.

"It was nothing," Segador said. "After Souza spoke to me about you, I was sorry we could not do more."

"What more could you have done?"

The major's lips parted over his long teeth in a mirthless smile. "We could have killed the *cabrón* who drugged you, *compañero*."

"You know who did it?"

"It could have been anyone in that café. What's the matter with Delgado? Didn't he know it is owned by a dirty Falangist?" Color rose to the major's dark cheeks. He was a man of Hall's own years, shorter, but with a pair of powerful hands capable of hiding the hands of a man twice his size. The hands were gripping the arms of his chair now, the knuckles white as the major fought to control his rage. Hall knew the feeling, sensed the fires that burned in the major's head. He called me *compañero* a moment ago, he thought, he knows what I'm after.

"Pepe is all right," Hall said.

"He should have more brains." The major opened the locked middle drawer of his desk, pulled out a sealed brown envelope. "Your papers," he said. "Please examine them and see if everything is present."

Hall tore open the envelope, shook the contents to the desk. Passport, wallet, not more than fifty pesos missing, a book of travelers' checks, some sheets of blank paper, a small leather address book, wrist watch, the Bock cigarettes. Except for the fifty pesos, everything else which belonged in the wallet was there, money, pictures, cards, the letter from Havana.

"Nothing is missing," Hall said. He took the letter from its envelope and counted the pages.

"I'm sorry I had to read your love letter," Segador said. "But it was necessary."

"I know," Hall said. "But it is not a love letter."

The massive face of the major reflected his surprise. "Not a love letter?" he asked. "Ah, here's the coffee. Come in, corporal. Set the trays down on the desk."

Hall waited until the corporal left. "It is not a love letter," he repeated. "I would like very much to interpret it for you. I think it might explain why I was drugged."

"Before you start," the major said, "there are two things that you should know. The first is that Souza has given me a fairly good idea of why you came to our country. The second is that for your own sake, and for ours, I had to notify your Embassy that we had picked you up drunk in a village café last night."

"Drunk?"

"I'm sorry, *compañero*. I mean no disrespect, but your Embassy is not very much in sympathy with many things a man like yourself is willing to die defending. Under the circumstances, you can spare yourself some unnecessary trouble if you say merely that you were drunk. If you stick to this story, you can help yourself and, to be very frank, you can help Don Anibal."

"You are his friend, aren't you?"

The major got to his feet. "His friend?" He undid his tie, then took his shirt off. His torso was a mass of old and, for the main part, improperly sewn scars. Mementoes of bullets, steel whips, knives. "My republicanism is more than skin deep, my friend."

"Then I can tell you everything." Hall dipped into the tin of American cigarettes. "It started in San Juan," he began, "or rather it really started in Geneva, when I met Don Anibal for the first time. But it was in San Juan that I read that Dr. Ansaldo was on his way to San Hermano to treat Don Anibal. And if I may jump to the end of my story first, this love letter seems to confirm what I suspected about Ansaldo. Do you see what it says here about the doctor who treated Carlos?"

For an hour, Hall told Segador of what he had learned and experienced since arriving in the country. The major interrupted with questions frequently, made notes in a small black notebook. "Please," he said, when Hall finished his account, "I am going to repeat the important parts of the story to you. Correct me if I am wrong or if I leave anything out."

He recited the story back to Hall, then consulted his watch. "The Press Secretary of your Embassy is due to call for you in a few minutes," he said. "Please remember your story. You were drunk."

"Was I with a *puta*?" Hall asked.

The major grinned. "No," he said, "that I did not think necessary. Although if it were, I assure you I would tell your Embassy that you were with the mangiest *puta* in six provinces."

"What do we do now?"

"It is hard to say. In the meanwhile, I think there is something you need." He took a large automatic out of his desk, slipped a clip of bullets into its grip, and handed the gun and a small box of cartridges to Hall. "If we could only prove to Don Anibal before it is too late that Ansaldo ..."

"How?"

"We must find a way. In the meanwhile, stay alive for the next few days. I have friends. They will watch for your safety. Souza, others. They will bring you my messages. And be careful in cafés."

Chapter nine

The American Embassy sent a well-dressed young attaché to call for Hall in the morning. He arrived in a low-slung yellow sedan, introduced himself as Orville Smith, snubbed everyone in sight, and relaxed only when he and Hall were well out of sight of the camp. "They said that you sure hung one on," he said pleasantly and, Hall realized, with even a touch of admiration.

"Must have been something I ate," Hall answered.

"Glad you turned up intact, old man. Might have led to some amusing complications. If the major had called five minutes later, this would have appeared on the front page of *El Imparcial* this morning."

He gave Hall a galley proof of a news story. *Missing American Writer Believed Victim of Communists.* Missing since yesterday ... last seen leaving hotel ... On Wednesday, at American Embassy party, Hall had discussed Red threats to his safety, told publisher of *Imparcial* that giant Red assassin had followed him day before ... Embassy officials described Hall as author of book on experiences on *H.M.S. Revenger* ... The missing American failed to phone or keep appointment made with publisher of *Imparcial* in connection with Soviet threats ... Feared abducted and killed.

"What do you make of it?" Hall asked.

"Politics. They take their politics seriously down here. Was it true that you were followed?"

"Yes. But not by the Reds. By the fascists."

"Are there any fascists down here?" This in a tone of detached amusement.

"A few. How well do you know Fernandez?"

"Quite well. He's one of the few gentlemen in San Hermano. Comes from an old Spanish aristocratic family. Did you really have an appointment with him?"

"It wasn't definite. He told me he had heard of some Red plot to bump me off. I just kidded him along."

"Mr. Fernandez is really very well informed," Smith said. "He has a crack staff of reporters, and the information that they pick up shouldn't be ignored."

"Yeah," Hall said. "I hear he's good. Matter of fact, I heard *Imparcial* is getting the Cabot Prize this year."

It was like a shaft driven into Smith's armor. "No!" he exclaimed. "Who told you?"

"Some *puta*," Hall said, dryly. "In bed." He watched the blood rushing to Orville Smith's head. "You'd be surprised at what a gal who sleeps around can pick up."

"She was pulling your leg, Hall."

Hall grinned. "Please, Mr. Smith," he said. "Gentlemen don't discuss such things." Smith grew redder.

"Not to change the subject," Hall said, "but what's cooking in town? In politics, for example. Doesn't the Congress open today?"

"Not really. They have the ceremonial opening this afternoon. According to tradition, the President speaks to the entire Congress. Then they settle down to a week of reviewing last year's business. The first working session really starts in about ten days."

"And today I guess Gamburdo is speaking instead of Tabio."

"Oh, beyond a doubt. Tabio is really on his last legs, old man. I suppose I should feel sorry about the old coot, but then you learn things in my game."

"About Tabio?"

"Oh, yes. We had information that in his address to the Congress, Tabio was planning to call for the nationalization of all the mines in the country."

"But why?"

"Oh," Smith said, "because he was being forced into it, I guess. I've met Tabio and he's not as bad as his enemies make him out to be. But what are you going to do when you are elected by a Popular Front majority? The Communist Senators and Deputies are all from the mining provinces up north. They've been hollering for the nationalization of the mines for twenty years. Now they're strong enough to put the squeeze on Tabio."

"But isn't Gamburdo in the Popular Front?"

"Gamburdo is different," Smith said. "He has different ideas, and he can't be pressured by the bolos."

"I'm doing a story on Gamburdo for a magazine back in the States. You get around. Tell me more about Gamburdo. I've got him down as the coming man on the continent. Am I half cocked, or is he really hot?"

Orville Smith discussed Gamburdo, Tabio, the political scene. He talked about the politicos, about their ideas, about the gossip which followed them in their careers. Carefully prodded by Hall, he spoke fluently for nearly two hours. It was a very revealing monologue. It told Hall how Orville Smith had spent his three years in San Hermano. Week-end parties at the estates of wealthy Spanish planters. Dinners, cocktails, high masses, weddings,

fishing trips with the Vardienos and the Fernandezes and the Gamburdos. Info straight from the horse's mouth.

Tabio the tool and or agent of bolshevism. The better element. How social legislation would push taxes up and cut down returns on American investments. Vardieno gives lovely parties on his island. No, not many lately. No oil for the boats, hard enough to get it for his narrow-gauge Diesel locomotives. Fine lad, young Quinones; made the golf team at Princeton. The Vardieno girl in the Press Bureau? That would be the one who went to finishing school in the States. She just started in at the Bureau for some experience. Cross and Sword? Oh, I know the pinkos back home would call it fascist. It's not, really. Conservative, for free enterprise and private ownership. All the better-element folks belong or support it. Do I know any labor leaders? No, never met one. Did I ever spend a week-end in a small village hotel? No, thank you, the roaches are bigger than sparrows in the sticks.

Hall thought about the art of diplomacy. You take a kid from the FFV's and at an early age you wrap him in cellophane and send him off to some nice, prophylactic boarding school, well-heeled white Gentiles only, thank you, High Episcopalians preferred, and only nice clean thoughts, none of them less than a century old, are gently swished against the cellophane until some of them seep through by osmosis. He meets only the sons of the better element and outside of an adolescent clap he picks up on one wild week-end with some of the boys in New York he has no real problem until he's eased out of prep and then he has an idea he wants to go to Harvard but the family prevails and he does time at Princeton, nearly makes varsity football but a high tackle in a practice scrimmage changes his mind, and then he is ready for his place on the board of the mill but someone—a nice girl of fine breeding, no doubt—puts another idea in his head. So he goes to Georgetown, fills out a lot of nasty forms, and then, *voilá!*, the young

monsieur arrives in Paris as Third Secretary and dreamily sends that first letter home to the folks: Hello Folks, here I am in Gay Paree learning how to be an Ambassador.

And then in Paris, Hall thought, listening to Orville Smith, your young Third Secretary naturally gravitates to his French equivalents, the young bluebloods who were reared in French cellophane and got the same ideas, only in French, in their own versions of Princeton and Groton. The better element meets the better element, and he makes factual, intelligent reports. The Popular Front falling into hands of the bolos. This he learns at a week-end party on Flandin's yacht. The Croix de Feu and the Cagoulards are fine, conservative forces. Only the pinkos call them fascists, but Bertrand de Juvenal, the fledgling ambassador's pal, knows otherwise. Sit-down strikes, forty-hour week, vacations with pay—he puts them all down in his reports; communist, of course. Got the lowdown on the beach at Cannes just the other day. Daladier is the man to watch. Yes, he is in the Popular Front. But Daladier's different. He's like Monsieur Laval, the French Calvin Coolidge. Fine force for sensible government. There will be no war, Munich has settled that. Got the lowdown from Flandin himself. Germany will be defeated. Spent a most fascinating week-end with General Weygand. Marechal Pétain is man of the hour. Marechal Pétain will make France another Verdun. Vichy wants to be friends with Washington. The Marechal indignantly denies, in private, that that was a Nazi salute you saw in the newsreels, sir, he says he was just waving at the cameramen. But Bertrand de Juvenal does not deny, and Laval does not deny, and Daladier weeps in his collapsed house of cards. And then comes the transfer to San Hermano at a better rating.

Smith pointed to the suburbs of San Hermano ahead of them. "We made good time," he said. "We'll be in the Embassy in ten minutes."

"Good going. You can drop me at the Bolivar, if you don't mind."

"Not at all, old man. But say, why don't you drop by for a spot of lunch with the old man and the boys at the Embassy? We'd love to have you with us and, besides, the old man will probably want to see for himself that you're in one piece."

Hall looked at his watch. "What time do you have lunch?"

"About one."

"Good. I'd like to join you. But I'll still have time to stop off at the Bolivar to change and pick up my mail. I'm expecting a letter from my sweetheart."

Pepe was waiting in his cab in front of the Bolivar. He was contrite and subdued. "I nearly killed you with my stupidity, Mateo," he said. "I should have known that café was owned by Falangistas."

"It's nothing, Pepe. I had it coming to me. I'm all over it now, anyway. What's new?"

"I have the complete list of where the passengers from the *Marques de Avillar* are staying. Their names, too. Except the names of the two men who are at the Gamburdo ranch. But they are still there."

"Did you recognize any of the names?"

"My friends are examining the lists now. I'll have them back for you in the evening."

"Have you seen Duarte?"

"I told him about you. He wants you to call him at the Mexican Embassy."

"I will, later. I have to go to my room for a minute, and then I want you to take me to the American Embassy. I'm having lunch there." He entered the hotel and asked for his mail at the desk. There was a message from Jerry, a short gossipy note from his publisher, and another love letter from Havana.

The note from Jerry was very short. "I missed you, you dog," it said. "Phone me when you return to town. Jerry."

The letter from Havana, mailed the day after the first letter, was almost a duplicate of the first. Again it protested its love, but this time it said, "How many times must I tell you that the man you think is your rival is unworthy of all human decencies? Far from being a rival in my eyes, I look upon him as a creature worse than an assassin. You must believe me; I detest the man." Hall put the letter in his wallet.

He examined his room carefully. It had not been searched, the stethoscope was still in its hiding place, his clothes were just as he had left them. Everything was as it had been. Hall took out his portable typewriter, copied the *El Imparcial* story which had been killed, and sealed the copy in an envelope. He went downstairs, got into the cab, and slipped the envelope into Pepe's pocket.

"Give the envelope to Dr. Gonzales," he said. "And tell him to get the information to Major Segador right away."

"I'll drive right out to the doctor as soon as I leave you. Shall I wait for you outside of the American Embassy after I see the doctor?"

"I think you'd better."

Ambassador Skidmore seemed pleased to see Hall. "You gave us quite a scare, young fellow," he said, his ruddy face beaming, white hair bobbing as Skidmore shook his head from side to side in mock anxiety. "Ah, you newspaper boys," he laughed. "Always going off on a tear when you are

least expected to! And here poor Joe Fernandez was so sure that the Reds had made hamburger out of you, Hall."

"I'm sorry I spoiled a good story," Hall said. "I'd better call Fernandez on the phone before he sends out another alarm."

"No need to, my boy," the Ambassador said. "Joe Fernandez is joining us at lunch."

Fernandez showed up with a former Senator, a dignified old dandy named Rios, who sported a silver-headed cane, a waxed, dyed mustache, and a Cross and Sword emblem in his lapel. They shared the table in the Ambassador's small private dining room with Hall, Orville Smith and the Ambassador.

The publisher fawned over Hall like a long-lost brother. "You are safe," he exclaimed. "Thanks be to the Virgin Mother! What happened? Was it very bad?"

"I got drunk," Hall said. "That's all that happened."

"Ridiculous, Señor Hall! You are a man who can take his drink. You were drugged. Mark my words, señor, you were drugged. You don't know these Reds."

Orville Smith winked broadly at Hall. "The main thing is," he said to Fernandez, "that Hall is safe now. I'm sure he appreciates your concern, Don José." In deference to the Ambassador's three-word Spanish vocabulary, Smith and the others spoke English. Rios, who spoke only Spanish, sat between Skidmore and Smith, who acted as their interpreter.

"What province did you represent in the Senate?" Hall asked the former Senator.

"San Martin, in the north."

"Don Joaquin is a great statesman," Fernandez interrupted. "But when El Tovarich prepared his gangsters for the elections two years ago, he armed the Red miners and they held their guns in the ribs of Don Joaquin's majority."

Hall listened to Smith translate this account of Rios' defeat at the polls before he spoke. "And do you plan to run again, Señor Rios?" he asked.

Fernandez answered for the dandy. "He will run again," he shouted, "and he will be elected. Fire can fight fire. Guns can fight guns."

"I have *pantalones*," Rios said. "I am a man of honor."

"Don Joaquin's constituents demand that he runs again," Fernandez said. He turned to the Ambassador, became his own translator. The ex-Senator nodded happily at every word Fernandez addressed to the Ambassador, as if by nodding he could bolster the words whose meaning he had to guess.

"How do you think things will go in Congress today?" Hall asked Fernandez.

"The same as every year, Señor Hall. Ceremonials, the speech, and then—*quién sabe*?"

Rumors rose from the table. Everyone had a choice rumor to air. Rios had it on good authority that Tabio's illness was merely a pretext; the President was afraid to face the Congress lest they force him to justify his wild socialistic measures which had put the national budget in such dire peril. Orville Smith informed the men at the table that Tabio's illness had taken a more serious turn. "In fact, I understand that Dr. Ansaldo has informed the government that he will refuse to operate on Tabio without the written permission of the Cabinet." Fernandez spoke of Ansaldo's skill as a surgeon.

"How about Gamburdo's speech, Joe?" the Ambassador said. "You promised to bring me an advance copy."

"I told my secretary to bring it to you as soon as it arrived," Fernandez answered. "It is very late in arriving today."

"Have you any idea of what he is going to say, Joe?"

"He is a very sound man," Fernandez said. "I am sure that the speech will be satisfactory."

"It won't call for the nationalization of the mines, at any rate," Smith added.

He made the mistake of translating his remark for Joaquin Rios. He might just as well have dropped a match into a keg of gunpowder. The wax mustaches under the purpling nose of ex-Senator Rios began quivering even before he unleashed an avalanche of ringing livid paragraphs on the subject. His eyes blind to the cold stares of José Fernandez, he unlimbered his heaviest verbal artillery, pounded the table until the glasses rattled, pointed accusing fingers at every corner of the room, and otherwise managed rather effectively to end the luncheon. Fernandez fairly had to drag him out of the Embassy to cool him down.

"Fine fellows," Skidmore said to Hall when they were gone. "Best of the lot down here."

"Sure," Hall said. "I've known all about Fernandez for years."

"He's a great guy, Hall. Publishes one of the best newspapers on the continent. As a matter of cold fact, old man, I wouldn't be at all surprised if he won the—well, he might be in for a rather high honor."

"I know. The Cabot Prize."

"Who told you?"

Hall looked at Smith, who was growing uncomfortable. "I can't remember," he said. "But it's hard to keep such a secret in San Hermano."

"Well, I'll be damned," the Ambassador laughed. "It was nice to see you again, old man. Drop in any time when you have a problem."

"Problems in San Hermano? Things seem to be pretty much under control, I'd say."

"Yes," the Ambassador admitted. "Things are pretty quiet."

"Will it be as quiet when Tabio dies? I heard talk that the Gamburdo crowd is pretty close to the fascists."

"Gamburdo?" Skidmore grew both amused and indignant. "What kind of communistic nonsense have you been hearing? I know Eduardo Gamburdo intimately. I've entertained him at the Embassy, and I've week-ended at his estate. He's a fine conservative influence on this government and, damn it all, young man, Gamburdo is a thorough gentleman."

"Yeah," Hall said. "Thorough." For a few seconds, during the luncheon, he had toyed with the idea of telling the Ambassador all that he knew about Gamburdo and Ansaldo and the role of the Falange. Now he cursed himself for a fool. Skidmore, he saw, was Orville Smith at sixty, but with the power to make trouble for any visiting American who rubbed against his deep-set prejudices. "Well, thanks for everything," he said. "I guess you're pretty busy today."

Hall rushed out of the Embassy, his face twitching crazily as he charged down the marble walk to the curb. He had broken into a heavy sweat which drenched him from head to toe. "Get me out of here," he roared at Pepe. "Get going before I kill someone."

"What happened?" Pepe asked.

"Nothing. Where are we going?"

"Nowhere. What's the matter with your face?"

"Nothing." He put his hand against his right cheek. "Nothing. Did you see Gonzales?"

"I gave him the letter. He said you should go to the opening of Congress today. He says you might be surprised."

"Thanks. I had my surprise for the day already."

"Gonzales was serious. He says you should go. It starts at four o'clock."

"All right. I'll go. Better take me to Gobernacion. I'll need a pass from the Press Bureau. No, wait, let's go to Duarte's place. He takes his siesta at this time. I'll call that Vardieno bitch from his place."

Hall opened his tie. "Have we time to stop for a beer?" he asked. "I'm dying for a drink."

"No. We might miss Duarte. He'll have beer for you."

Pepe was right. Duarte did have beer, and had they stopped on the way, they would have missed him. He was about to leave the house when they arrived. Duarte was wearing the green dress uniform of a Mexican lieutenant-colonel, to which he had pinned his Spanish medals and insignia.

"Going to war?" Hall asked.

"No. To the opening of Congress."

"You've got time."

"Hall is dying," Pepe said. "He needs cold beer."

The Mexican brought out five bottles of beer. "I've got more in the ice box," he said. "What's the matter?"

"He wants to kill someone," Pepe said.

"Me too. What of it?"

Hall put the mouth of the opened bottle to his lips, tilted his head back. "God," he said, "Pepe is right. Let me make one phone call, and then I'll spill it. I've got to get it off my chest before I blow the top."

He reached the Vardieno girl on the phone. She was so sorry. The lists had all gone down to the Hall of Congress. Anyway, all requests for foreign writers had to come through their embassies. That was the Press Chief's new ruling.

"That's fine. That settles it," Hall said when he put the phone away. "Now I must ask the Ambassador to approve me for the press gallery."

"Sit down, Mateo," Duarte said. "I can wait a full hour if necessary." He put a bottle of cold beer into Hall's hand. "Tell us about it."

"I'll wait outside," Pepe said.

"No. Stay with us, Pepe. I want you to know the facts. Do you both remember that I was waiting for a letter from Havana? Well, I got it. Two letters, in fact. They told me what I wanted to know about Ansaldo." He drained the second bottle and then told them what had happened to him at the Embassy.

"Don't bother with him," Duarte said. "You don't need his permission. I'll give you my diplomatic invitation and my carnet. The uniform is all I need to get through the gates. You'll sit in the diplomatic gallery with me."

"Great."

"You can even act as Skidmore's interpreter."

"*Con mucho gusto!*"

Riding to the Hall of Congress, Duarte drew Hall's attention to the loud speakers fastened to the poles in every plaza. "The government has bought over a hundred speakers in the past two weeks," he said. "I know, because most of them were bought in California and I had to O.K. their transit duty-free through Mexico. I think our friend Gamburdo is up to something today."

Hall looked at a knot of grim-faced *Hermanitos* standing under one of the speakers. "I think the people suspect it too."

"We couldn't get an advance copy of the speech at the Embassy, Mateo. Usually, Tabio releases advance copies to the press and the diplomatic corps on the morning of the speech."

"I wonder why?"

"I can only suspect the worst. After the speech, can you come back to the house with me? I want to hear what happened to you. Commander New called me this morning and told me that he had asked the police to investigate Fielding's death."

"What? On the phone?"

"Yes."

"Oh, the damned idiot! Now even if the police are not fixed every damned fascist in South America knows that the Fielding thing went wrong!"

"It's too late for cursing now. Let's talk about the whole picture after the speech."

The plaza facing the Hall of Congress was filling up with citizens who had come to hear the speech over the public-address system. Scattered through the crowds were men carrying signs reading "*Viva* Eduardo Gamburdo." Duarte pointed them out.

"Every one a Cross-and-Sword ruffian," he said. "I used to see the same faces while the Falange was legal. They then wore the blue shirt."

"I can't see their faces," Hall said.

"I've seen their faces. Three months ago Lombardo came to San Hermano to address the C.T.A.L. convention. The same gang showed up with their filthy signs, only this time the signs read: '*Viva* Christ the King' and 'Go back to Bolshevik Mexico, you Dirty Jew' and 'Down with the Commune of the anti-Christ' and other lovely things. I know them."

"Something is happening," Duarte said when they were in the building. "Everyone is too quiet." They followed a military escort to the Mexican box.

The Mexican Ambassador was tense. "I don't like it," he said to Hall and Duarte. "Why is everyone so quiet on the rostrum?"

"They look as if they've seen a ghost," Hall said.

Duarte studied the faces of the officials on the flag-decked rostrum. "Where's Gamburdo?" he said. "Has anyone seen him?"

"I saw his car parked outside when I came in," the Ambassador said.

"What's that? Do you hear it, Mateo?"

"Sounds like distant thunder, Felipe."

"It's not thunder. It's the crowd. What have they got to cheer about?"

"Gamburdo's cheer leaders must have gone to work."

"I don't like it," the Mexican Ambassador said. "I don't like it."

A gavel fell on a block. At a signal from the President of the Senate, a military band hidden in one of the caucus rooms began to play the national anthem. The music was piped in to the great hall over the public-address system.

The gavel called the Congress to order. A clerk called the roll, the Senate head started the parliamentary ritual. Then the band started to play the national anthem again, this time without a signal. A door behind the rostrum opened.

In the doorway, flanked by his two young sons, Anibal Tabio sat in a wheel chair. His closest friend, Esteban Lavandero, the Minister of Education, stood behind him. Slowly, the chair was wheeled to the rostrum.

"Members of the Congress," the Senate Chief shouted, "The President of the nation has come to deliver his annual address."

Chapter ten

There were two shouts. On the floor, one of the Senators screamed "*Viva La Republica!*" At the same moment a young voice in the press gallery yelled, "*Viva* Don Anibal Tabio!" and in the great hall every man sprang to his feet. The low distant thunder of the crowds in the Plaza had now swelled to a roar whose joyous overtones poured into the Hall of Congress through the doors, the windows, the steel and marble walls themselves. Senators and Deputies of the Popular Front Parties were the first in the hall to find their voices. "*Viva* Don Anibal!" they shouted, applauding wildly, laughing, yelling, embracing one another, wondering if the tears in their eyes could be seen by their colleagues. The anti-Tabio Congressmen remained on their feet, their hands moving in the motions of applause, their hearts cold and sick. Somehow, Eduardo Gamburdo had found his former place on the rostrum, was now standing and applauding with the other people in the hall. The signals had been crossed. The dead President had come to life. Anibal Tabio was sitting before the chromium microphone, serene and unmoving, his paralyzed legs neatly covered with a light Indian blanket.

Outside, the crowd had begun to sing the national anthem. The legislators, the reporters, many of the Latin American diplomats in the visitors' gallery took up the words. Hall glanced at his neighbors. Tears flowed down the cheeks of Duarte and his chief. A few rows away, Skidmore and Orville Smith, correctly dressed in formal afternoon wear, stood stiffly at attention, their eyes firmly riveted to the strange tableau of Tabio and his entourage.

Someone thrust a huge bouquet of orange and blue mountain flowers at the invalid in the wheel chair. His son Diego accepted the flowers, laid them tenderly on an empty chair. Diego at fifteen was heavier than his father had

ever been, darker, more like an Indian peasant than the son of Anibal Tabio. His brother Simon, who now accepted the second bouquet, was an eighteen-year-old replica of Don Anibal himself. Tall, lithe, he had the same fair brown hair, the same thin spiritual face as the father. Lavandero, standing behind Tabio's chair, had the dark, brooding face of a Moor. His shock of black hair started at the peak of a high, broad forehead; his large black mustache failed to dominate his thick, strong lips. He was rubbing a hairy fist in his eyes and talking softly to Tabio.

The President, at fifty-three, seemed to have aged ten years since Hall had last seen him. His hair had turned gray, and everything about him was thinner than ever before in his life. In Geneva, Hall had always wondered what would have happened to the thin, delicate frame of Anibal Tabio in a tropical hurricane. Now, even from the gallery, Hall could see that Tabio had grown so thin that the high cheek bones which had always marked his slender face now stuck out like two sharp points, almost burying the deep-set gray eyes. Tabio sat quietly in his wheel chair, smiling at friends on the floor, looking first to Diego then to Simon, gently patting the hand of his older son when the boy put his hand on the father's fragile shoulder.

The ovation continued when the singing of the national anthem was completed. Tabio turned to Lavandero, whispered a few words. The Minister of Education held his hands, palms out, toward the assemblage. "Please," he said. "Please."

Guests and legislators took their seats. In another room, a drummer dropped his cymbal on the floor. It rent the sudden silence of the great hall, and then its echoes were stilled.

Anibal Tabio squeezed the hands of his sons, drew a deep breath, and faced the microphone before him.

"My countrymen," he said, "this is the third year in which I have had the honor of addressing you at this solemn hour. A week ago, I would have said that my chances of preaching my own funeral sermon were better than my chances of opening this, the fifteenth free Congress of our beloved Republic.

"But since then ..." he leaned forward, his long chin jutting pugnaciously forward as he gasped for breath, "since then many things have come to my ears. I have heard rumors. Strange and disturbing rumors about what was going to happen today. I need not repeat these rumors to you. You have all heard them."

Hall looked at Skidmore's face as Smith translated Tabio's words.

"Yes, you have heard them. When they came to my ears," Tabio said, "I thought: What is happening? Who dares to challenge the mandate of the people? Who dares to speak of perverting the will of the people? It was then that I knew, as never before, that a President's place is with the people. If I could sit up in my bed and talk this way to my sons, to my dear friend Esteban Lavandero, then I could sit up in this chair before you, the chosen representatives of the people.

"My good friends, this may be the last time I will ever speak to you ..."

Shouts of "No!" rang all over the hall.

"Hear me, friends. Hear me and mark well what I say. Once this nation honored me with the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. As your Minister, I crossed the ocean. I went to Geneva. I went to Spain, from where we have derived so much of our culture, our language, so much of our personality as a people.

"We are today a free people, not the colonial vassals we were in the days of Imperial Spain. But Spain, too, had become a free nation in 1931. I saw the

free Spain at the hour of her birth, when the hated Bourbon heard the voice of Spain's millions at the ballot and fled to the empty pleasures of a decaying society abroad. I also saw the free Spain in the hours of her agony. It was at that hour that I beheld for the first time the ugly bloodless face of fascism.

"It is a cold, metallic, impersonal face, my countrymen, the face of an Agusto Segura grown to superhuman power, the maniacal face of a mad killer who suddenly finds all the world's horrible instruments of destruction in his idiot hands. I saw this beast grow strong on the blood of free men, and I wept for a gallant people who, for a few brief moments, had presumed to control their own destinies.

"Yes," Tabio said, his hand pointing across an ocean, "yes, I wept for Spain, but through my tears I began to see my own native land, saw my own people enjoying this precious freedom. And at that moment I knew that I must dedicate whatever remained of my life to doing all that was in my power as a man and as a citizen to keep the beast of fascism from gorging on our young Republic.

"I have fought that fight to this very moment. But more important than anything I have done has been the magnificent unity of our peoples in their determination to struggle against fascism in all of its black forms. It has not been the President who has led the people in this great crusade. No, my countrymen. It has been the people who have created and given their mandate to the President, to the Congress."

Tabio had never learned a single orator's trick. As a statesman, he retained all the speaking habits he had originally formed during his early years as a young professor of history at the university. Teaching, he once explained, was the process of thinking aloud. And at this moment, in what he guessed would be his last speech to the nation, Anibal Tabio returned to the concepts

which had gone into his great book on the relationships of people to government in modern democracy. For the better part of thirty minutes, he explored these relationships again. After all these years, the professor was back in class, patiently expounding his ideas to a new set of faces.

"Well, that is the state and the people. I have not told you anything new. You have heard this all before from me." Tabio was laughing softly, and at himself. "But that is what happens when the people elect a pedantic professor as their President. Instead of a speech, they get a long, dry lecture."

Tabio paused, frowned at the people who sat hushed in the hall. "Have you forgotten how to laugh?" he asked. A few loyal followers tried to laugh. "Good," Tabio said.

"But I am not finished, my countrymen. I have spoken of the ideal democratic state. Many of us like to feel that we have achieved this state. That perfection is ours. This is dangerous thinking. Of course, we are not as imperfect as a certain newspaper in San Hermano and a certain organization which has usurped the symbol of brotherly love as its emblem"—this time he drew some real laughter—"we are not as imperfect as they would have you believe.

"But even if we were the most perfect state in the world, today this would mean very little. Our chances of surviving, of progressing until the Republic of Man became even more attractive than the Kingdom of God, our chances of surviving at all would still be obscured. If our nation were some remote island in the skies, whirling on its own axis, remote from all other lands, perhaps then I would have no fears for our future.

"We are not this remote planet unto ourselves. We share a world with a hundred nations, a thousand races. I do not regret that we are part of this world. I think we should rejoice in our membership in the world's family of

races. But we must not lose sight of the fact that our nation, no less than any other nation, be it free or fascist, is part of this strange family.

"We must never forget that the great war which started in unhappy Spain in July, 1936, was not a war between good and evil in Spain alone. It was a war not of two Spanish ideas but of two fundamental world ideas. It was the start of the universal death struggle between the slave-world ideas of fascism and the free-world ideas of political and economic democracy. It was the start of the fascist war against freedom that has now spread all over the world."

Tabio glanced at his two sons. He accepted a glass of water, smiling at the legislators in the front rows as he drank. "Freedom," he said, "is there a man who does not know the meaning of the word?" Before he returned to the theme of the world war which had started in Spain, he explored the full meaning of freedom in modern times. It was only after he had delivered a profound essay on freedom which shook Matthew Hall until the American felt a lump rising in his throat that Tabio picked up the earlier threads.

"In Spain, then, the forces of freedom suffered a heavy loss. But what of those small men with narrow little minds who held the reins of so much of the world's power while Spain bled? What of these tiny statesmen, these sleek somnambulists who held lace handkerchiefs before their narrow mouths and laughed while fascism marched in Spain? What of these wretches who, through the immoral instrument called non-intervention, sought to end freedom in Spain in the criminal conviction that the blood of Spain alone would satisfy the fascist beast?

"History was not long in giving the lie to these gentry. The beast who had whetted his insatiable appetite in Spain now started almost immediately to claw at the world. It was in April of 1939 that Madrid fell. By September

the beast belched and turned on the very creatures who had covertly and overtly helped him subdue Spain."

That Tabio had not raised his voice at this point, that he in fact spoke more softly, accentuated all the more the scorn and the anger in his heart.

"Nations have fallen to the beast," he continued. "Nations of meager freedom, like Poland. Nations of great and traditional freedom, like France. The war has spread over the world like a Biblical plague. Russia could not escape it. Nor could our great sister Republic, the United States.

"Yes, North Americans now have felt the pain, the anguish, the power of Axis treachery. No nation can escape this war.

"My countrymen, we are not an island in the skies. We are a sovereign nation in the same world, on the same earth, in the same waters, sharing the same era as the United States, England, Russia and China. It is not for us to choose whether or not we can stay out of this war. That choice the world does not permit us. Our only choice is the determination of what our role must be in this war.

"There has been strange talk in our land lately. There has been strange and deceitful talk of neutrality. Has it not occurred to any of you that those in our midst who howl the loudest for neutrality, who show such a sudden concern for the lives and safety of the humblest Indian peasant, that these pious seekers after neutrality have never before worn the white dove on their family escutcheons? Who are these peaceful gentlemen who grow pale in the presence of bloodshed? Are they not the same persons who as young men were proud to be officers in the armies of Segura, who laughed and drank as they ruthlessly shot down defenseless miners in the northern provinces?

"Who are these sudden pacifists in our Republic? Are they not the very devout gentlemen who sent money and rum and cigars to the fascists in Spain during the Spanish phase of this war? Are they not the very men who sent cables of homage to Hitler and Mussolini after the shame of Munich? Are they not the very men who even now wear the medals of Nazi Germany, of Blackshirt Italy, of Falangist Spain—who wear these medals proudly while they chortle over the blood of dying Russians on the Eastern Front, of dying Americans on the Bataan peninsula?"

Tabio stopped. His eyes searched the press gallery, then fixed on José Fernandez. He pointed a graceful hand at the publisher of *El Imparcial*.

"I ask you," he said, "are they not the very men who write in their papers that Adolf Hitler, whatever be his alleged faults, is waging a holy crusade on behalf of Christian civilization against Marxist atheism?"

Tabio continued looking at Fernandez, but Lavandero shot a fierce scowl at Ambassador Skidmore, who seemed bewildered and unhappy as Smith translated Tabio's questions. The Ambassador, too, had seen the object of Tabio's shaft. Angry, uneasy laughter broke out on the floor. A cry of "Long live the United Nations!" from one of the Popular Front deputies was immediately answered with the shout "Long live Christ the King" from the public gallery.

The President, who had heard both shouts, turned to the gallery. "Who are these neutrals?" he asked. "Are they not the same fascists who hope to fool God by casting their fascist swords in the image of the Cross of Jesus? Are they not the fanatics who, rather than see the Axis beast destroyed, would first destroy the freedom and the dignity of their own land?

"They lie. There can be no neutrals in this world war. He who calls himself a neutral is either a fool or a fascist. And the fine gentlemen who prate of neutrality are very clever men."

The Popular Front Congressmen rose to their feet, applauding and adding to the din with their shouts of agreement. They were joined by a few of the independents. The delegates of the rightist coalition remained in their seats, their arms folded across their chests. But they were not quiet. As the ovation for Tabio continued, loud cries came from the ranks of the men who kept their seats. "Down with atheism!" shouted one rightist Senator. "We have no quarrel with any other nation!" another yelled. "We will not die for Godless Russia!"

"Long live democracy!" a Popular Front deputy answered. "Long live the anti-fascist United Nations!"

Esteban Lavandero pleaded with the Congress for silence.

"My countrymen," Tabio said, "there can be no neutrality in this war. There is one official neutral in Europe. His name is Francisco Franco. We all know what this hypocritical neutrality really is; how it shields the vile aid that fascist Spain is lending to the Axis. But this is as it should be. Franco is a fascist, and today fascism must triumph all over the world or be crushed forever.

"But what of our own nation, what of the twenty nations of Hispanic America in this war? What is our stake in this world struggle?

"If the Axis wins this war, we, like all other nations, must of necessity lose our political freedom. And if we once lose our political democracy, we must begin again the long, bitter struggle to win it once more before we can even begin to dream of creating an era of economic democracy.

"If the United Nations win, if world fascism is crushed forever, a new world era of economic democracy must begin at once. It will not come easily. The defeat of the Axis will not immediately bring in its wake the millennium. It will, however, give the common people of the world the final realization of

their great power. In this lies the inherent strength of political democracy. For democracy is not a static thing. It can grow and bring in the era of economic democracy, or it can falter and give way to fascism.

"The common people of the world, today fighting and dying behind the banners of the United Nations, have served notice on history that they will not rest until fascism has been swept from the face of this earth."

Tabio was now speaking with both arms raised, his hands reaching out to everyone. "My countrymen, I have said enough. I know that I have spoken the thoughts that are uppermost in the minds of that great majority of our citizens who have given their mandate to you and to me. In a week, you will have to frame the mandate for the delegation which will speak for our Republic at the forthcoming conference of the nations of the Americas. Speak out! Speak out honestly, speak out openly. Speak as the spokesmen of a democracy. Speak as the citizens of the embattled united democracies of the entire world must speak at this hour. Speak for the free men of the free world. Speak firmly, for you will be speaking not only for the future of our own Republic but for the future of all mankind."

The Cuban Ambassador, whose seat was nearest the podium, crossed the plush rail and rushed to Tabio's wheel chair. He fell to his knees, embraced the President. In a flash, Eduardo Gamburdo left his own place and copied the Cuban's gesture. The rostrum became crowded with dignitaries bent on paying the same homage to Anibal Tabio. The envoys of the Latin American democracies, the delegates of the Free French and the Spanish Republican juntas, the leaders of the trade unions and the chiefs of the Popular Front parties milled around the wheel chair as the pro-democrats in the hall added their voices to the cheers of the crowds in the Plaza. Duarte, his soft raspy words choked and unintelligible, embraced Hall.

Lavandero was pulling the wheel chair back toward the door of the Speaker's Chamber. The well-wishers of the President followed him into the room. For a moment, the people in the auditorium applauded the blank door through which Tabio had vanished. Then young Simon Tabio returned to pick up the flowers on the chair, and his father's supporters cheered louder, punctuating their cheers with cries of "Long live Don Anibal!" The youth streaked into the room behind the platform.

"Let's get out of here," Hall said.

"I've got to go to my office," Duarte said. "I have to prepare a report on the speech. Join me, and then we can talk."

"Pepe can drive us over."

"No one drives today," Duarte said when they reached the visitors' doorway.

The streets were jammed thick with people. Hall had never seen so many people in San Hermano before. It was as if every house, every building in the university, every shop, every wharf, every school had been turned inside out and its people poured out into the streets. Whole families in their best clothes, trolley drivers in their work uniforms, longshoremen in their dungarees, even peasants from the other side of Monte Azul in their brown-cotton trousers and their broad-brimmed straw hats milled along the sidewalks, the pavements, the Plaza, the trolley tracks. Cars, taxis, trucks, wagons, trolleys were parked crazily all over the place.

Pepe, like a hundred other drivers within a block of the Hall of Congress, was standing on top of his car, waving the flag of the Republic, shouting, "Long live the United Nations! Long live Don Anibal! Long live the Republic!"

Crowds formed around each parked vehicle, joined the cries of the drivers. The roofs of the trolleys were jammed with groups of students and

motormen waving flags or the banners of their student societies and their unions. Thousands of Hermanitos, kids in overalls, housewives, lawyers, shopkeepers wandered through the crowds with framed portraits of Anibal Tabio which an hour ago had hung from the walls of their homes, their offices, their shops. The pictures of Tabio ranged from formal photographs and oil paintings to crude charcoal drawings and pictures torn from the daily press.

Hall and Duarte made their way to Pepe's sedan. When he saw them, he put the flag in his left hand and with his right hand he pointed to something on the ground on the opposite side of the car. "Look!" Pepe shouted. "Down here!"

A pile of torn Cross-and-Sword placards lay on the cobbles inside a ring of laughing young Hermanitos who were urinating on the signs. Some of the boys in this ring showed signs of having been in a fight.

"The fascists ran away," Pepe laughed. "Don Anibal's speech split their filthy ears."

"I'll see you later," Hall told Pepe.

"Wait!" Pepe shouted. He leaned over the side of his cab. "Boy," he said, "boy, where is that flag for the American *compañero*? That's the one. Thank you, boy." He lay down on his belly, stretched a huge paw into the crowd around the remains of the Cross-and-Sword banners. When he stood up, he had a small American flag in his hand.

"Wonderful," Hall said, taking the flag. "I guess it's also the Yankee day to howl."

A crowd formed around Hall and Duarte. They saluted the American flag, saluted the Mexican uniform.

"Long live the United States! Long live Mexico!" the crowd shouted, and the two men answered, as one, "Long live Don Anibal!"

The crowd separated, let them through. They walked a few steps, and then another crowd formed around them. Again they listened to cheers for the United States and Mexico, again they responded with their cheer for Tabio.

"Jesus H. Christ," Hall said. "This is the first time I've carried an American flag in the streets since I was a Boy Scout in Ohio."

"It will do you good, Mateo."

"I like it. But try to make anyone believe it back home!"

At the fourth block Hall and Duarte started to detour around a trolley car which had stopped in the middle of a crossing. A dozen hands reached down from the crowded roof. "*Compañeros!* Take our hands! Climb up! Take our hands! We want a speech!"

"Long live Mexico! Homage to Colonel Felipe Duarte, Counselor of the Mexican Embassy and hero of the war against the fascists in Spain!"

Duarte had to join the crowd on the roof of the stalled train. He made a short speech about Mexico, Republican Spain, and the greatness of Anibal Tabio.

Two more blocks of happy, cheering Hermanitos. Vivas, salutes for the American flag and the Mexican uniform. Men in dungarees and heavy shoes saluting the flag and the uniform with clenched fists. Young women and old men who embraced Hall and Duarte. Even an ancient with a nicotine-yellowed white beard, who wiggled out of one crowd, tore the flag out of Hall's hand, kissed it, and then handed it back to the American with an embrace and a viva for Voodro Veelson.

They were relaxing over a beer in Duarte's office when the explosion came.

"What the hell...?" Hall cried.

There were two explosions. A little one, like the crack of a distant artillery piece in the mountains and then a louder, deep-toned whoosh of a noise. They had both heard such noises before.

"Remember that noise, Mateo?"

Hall was on his feet. "Do I! Only one thing makes a noise like that," he said. "Direct hit on a gasoline tank."

"Exactly."

While they were washing, the sun had begun to set. Now a new sun had risen in the skies of San Hermano, risen at a point about a mile north of the Embassy. A great sheet of flame had shot from the ground, stabbing at the purpling skies, straining to leap clear of the round heavy blobs of black smoke which rose from the same place and surged over and around the fires.

The streets were more crowded than they had been when Hall and Tabio left the Congress. New signs had been added to the placards and portraits of Tabio which the people carried. Tremendous sketches and blown-up photos of Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek, nailed to frames with handles for two men, bobbed over the heads of the crowds. Duarte, from the balcony, asked the people on the street what had happened. They thought it was a victory bonfire.

"The hell it is, Felipe. Let's see for ourselves."

"I must stay and write my cable. You go and then come back here."

"Can you lend me a car and a chauffeur?"

"You couldn't drive a car through these crowds. You'll have to walk. Leave through the back way. It opens on a narrow street leading to the Avenida de la Liberacion. You'll save time."

Hall found the narrow street deserted. He set out at a fast pace, his eyes on the flames and the increasingly heavy puffs of smoke. The shouts of the crowds on the broad avenues and the plazas followed him up the small street. Over the cries of the Hermanitos came the wail of the sirens, the clamor of the bells on the American fire engines the city had purchased a few years back.

The crowd half-pushed, half-guided Hall to the entrance of the Ritz. He ducked into the lobby to catch his breath, bought some cigars at the stand, lit one, and then decided to have a quick drink.

Margaret Skidmore was at the bar with Giselle Prescott and a young man Hall had met at the Embassy ball. The Prescott woman was wearing an immense wheel of a white hat. She was very drunk.

"What's up?" Hall asked.

"The Reds blew up a church," Margaret said. "How are you, Matt? I heard that you were out on a monumental bender. Too many women?"

"Too much alcohol." Then, to the man with the girls, "Didn't we meet at the Embassy party? My name is Hall."

"I'm the Marques de Runa."

"Spanish?"

Margaret answered for him. "No. Not exactly. The family had the title revalidated in 1930."

Giselle Prescott shuddered over an emptied glass. She whispered something about rum, romanism and rebellion.

"What's eating her?" Hall asked Margaret.

"Gin and communism. She's allergic to burning churches."

"My father phoned the governor of our province and demanded soldiers to protect the family estates," the young Marques said. "It is scandalous. We hear that they've already raped a nun and killed two priests. My father says that if El Tovarich ..."

"Who saw the church burning?" Hall interrupted.

"Everyone, señor."

"Any of you?"

Silence. "Any of you?" he repeated.

"It was anarchy," the Marques said. "When El Tovarich started to rant in Congress today the Reds swarmed into the city from the wharves. They tore a religious poster from my cousin's arms and beat him within an inch of his life."

"Is that a fact?" Hall was staring at the gold emblem of the Cross and Sword in the Marques' lapel. "That's too bad."

"You see what I meant," Margaret said. "Now you understand me, Matt."

"Sure. Now I understand. How about you, Giselle?"

"What about me? I'm filing for the WP today."

"Then you'd better come with me. I'm going to have a look at this burning church. Might be good color stuff."

"I don' wanna look," she said. "Gives me hives. Besides, I know all about it anyway."

Hall put his arm through Margaret's. "Let's you and me look, then," he said.

"Don't go!" the Marques cried. "You're both dressed too well. They'll kill you."

"I'd better not go with you, Matt."

"But I insist. I'm going and you're coming with me."

They watched de Runa stiffen. "Now don't be a child," she said. "Hall will bring me back intact."

"Don't go," the Marques said.

Hall freed his hands. For a moment he thought he would have to use them on the Marques. Then Margaret tugged his arm. "Let's go if we're going," she said. "You wait right here for me with Giselle, Freddie. I'll meet you here in half an hour."

The fire was five blocks from the Ritz. There was a half block heap of glowing brick and rubble. Behind the rubble stood an old church, one wall partially blown out. The firemen were playing streams of water into and around this hole.

"God!" Margaret said. "The stench!"

"Oil. My guess is that a thousand gallons of oil went up in smoke."

In the crowd standing at the rim of the fire lines, a taxi driver turned around and glanced at Hall. "Some fire," he said.

"What happened?"

"Garage. The Phoenix Garage went up in smoke. Blew a hole in the Cathedral when it exploded."

"The Phoenix Garage?"

"That's what it is, señor." The driver moved closer to the gutted rubble.

"You wait here, Margaret. I'm going to talk to the firemen." He crossed the fire lines, found his way to the engine captain near the main hydrant. When he returned to Margaret, he gave her a complete report. "The fire chiefs say that the Reds didn't blow up the church at all," he said. "Seems as if the gasoline tanks in the garage caught fire by themselves."

Margaret laughed. "Don't tell Gis," she said. "She's already cabled a story to the States that the Reds burned the church."

Chapter eleven

Duarte knew about the Phoenix Garage before Hall returned to the Mexican Embassy. "Commander New dropped in while you were at the fire," he explained. "He told me."

"Does he know anything else about it?"

"Not about the fire. But he does know a little more about Fielding. He says that Fielding's files have been cleaned out. There wasn't a single copy of any of Fielding's reports when the British officials opened the files."

"But the British have all the dope, Felipe. Fielding's reports—at least the ones he showed me—were all carbons of the reports he made to his Embassy."

"I know that. But if his reports are now in the hands of the Falange, the Axis knows it too. It will give them time to cover their traces. It will also put the finger on you. One of the things they did find in the office was a note Fielding had made reminding himself to prepare copies of certain reports for you, Mateo. That might explain what happened to you in that Falangist café on the waterfront the other day. Fielding had already been killed when you were drugged."

Hall lay down on the couch in Duarte's office, took his shoes off. "I'll be all right in a few minutes," he said. "I just need about ten minutes of this."

"I'll get some cold beer."

"No. I don't need it. Listen, Felipe, do the British know that I was drugged?"

"I don't think so. I didn't tell them, anyway. I wouldn't, without your permission."

"Maybe you should tell them. It might do some good. But what are we going to do now that we know about the fire? I still feel like a drunk on a merry-go-round."

Duarte laughed. "You can always get off and go home," he said.

"No. It feels worse when I get off."

"I did something this morning, Mateo. I sent word to General Mograd o through one of our diplomatic couriers."

"Mograd o? Of the Spanish air force?"

"He's living in Mexico City now. I asked him to rush everything he could get on Ansaldo. The largest Spanish Republican colony in the hemisphere is in Mexico, you know. I figured that surely there must be one man among the exiles—a doctor, a former Army officer, someone—who could give us the dope on Ansaldo."

"Sounds like a possibility."

"We'll see."

"Don't let me fall asleep here. I've got things to do."

"Then get some rest. I've got to complete my report." Duarte turned to his typewriter, glanced at what he had written on the sheet in the machine. "Mateo," he said, "I'm meeting Dr. Gonzales in an hour. We're going to try to reach Lavandero with your Havana information on Ansaldo. Will you join me?"

"No. I have some unfinished business myself. I think that before the night is over we'll know a lot more about Ansaldo."

"What are you going to do?"

Hall stifled a yawn. "I'm going to take a chance and shoot the works on someone who can talk. It might work."

"Be careful, Mateo. You look very tired."

"I'll turn in early. Let's have breakfast at your place tomorrow, eh?"

Hall found a phone booth in a tobacco shop near the Embassy. He called Jerry.

"I knew it would be you," she said. "I was waiting for you to call, you dog."

"I hope you're hungry," he said. "I'm taking you to dinner."

"I'm famished. Where are you?"

"I can be at the Bolivar in about fifteen minutes. Meet me in the lobby?"

"All right. But hurry. And just in case you've forgotten what I look like, I'll be wearing a red carnation."

He became part of the growing multi-directional parade in the streets. Nightfall had brought colored torches to the hands of many of the Hermanitos, and hundreds of new huge portraits of the four leaders of the United Nations. There was a new pattern to the street festivities. Now whole groups of Hermanitos, each marching behind a picture of one of the four statesmen, made their way through the crowds to the embassies of the United Nations and then to the Plaza de la Republica, where they paraded their signs and their sentiments in front of all the government buildings and the Presidencia. After that, the marchers joined the milling groups of

celebrators who just seemed to move around in slow circles, singing, cheering, loudly wishing a long life to Anibal Tabio and the United Nations.

The darkened Plaza was packed, torches in the hands of hundreds of the crowd bringing more light to the ancient square than had been seen there since the nation had been forced to begin conserving its fuel. Hall cut through the crowds toward the Bolivar, too excited to sense his fatigue. This is a night I shall long remember, he thought, this is the night I will tell my children about if I ever have any children. This is the night that I saw the power of the common people, the night I saw democracy take to the streets of a nation's capital and tell the world that fascism's day of cheap triumphs is done. This is the night of the meek who shall yet inherit the earth.

Through the shoulders of the crowd, he could see Jerry's red hair. As he drew closer, he saw that she had two little girls in her arms. The children were crying wildly, the tears choking in their throats and coursing down their contorted faces.

"There, there," Jerry was saying to them, "everything will be all right. You're only lost. We'll find out where you belong." But the strange foreign words only added to the terror in the frightened hearts of the girls.

"What happened?" Hall asked Jerry.

"They're lost. I was afraid they'd get trampled or something, Matt."

He spoke to the kids in their own language, soothing, silly words. Then he took them in his arms while Jerry dried their tears with a perfumed handkerchief. Between sobs, the little girls told Hall that they had slipped out of the house to see the fiesta and had been having a swell time until the crazy lady swooped them up, talking crazy words and keeping them from going on their way.

"Do you know where you live?" he asked them. They pointed toward their own house. "We will take you there. And don't call the señorita a crazy lady, little ones. She is your friend."

"Are they lost?" Jerry asked.

"Hell, no. Just tourists. Let's get them home, first."

The girls lived nearly a mile from the Bolivar. They watched the paraders in silence while Hall carried them to their house, but when he reached their block the girls insisted that they could walk the rest of the way. "No," he laughed, "I'm taking you right to your door. And I'm waiting in the street until you come to your window and throw me a kiss."

The girls, who had less than a dozen years between them, giggled and hid their heads in his shoulders. "We won't throw you a kiss," the older of the sisters said, shyly. "You aren't our *novio*."

"These little devils!" he laughed to Jerry. The girls began to squirm in his arms. "No, little ones," he told them, "I won't make any more crazy talk like the señorita."

"This is our house."

He put them down on the first steps. "Now hurry," he said. "Upstairs with you, and be quick!"

They scrambled up the stairs. "They're sweet," Jerry said. For a brief moment, the faces of the two little girls appeared at the open window on the first floor. Then the ample figure of a woman in a white cotton dress loomed behind them.

"Let's scram before they catch it," Hall said, but he was too late. The shrill cries of the girls, as their mother flailed their behinds with a righteous hand, followed Hall and Jerry down the street.

"Me and my Good-Neighbor policy," Jerry said. "It's all my fault."

"They deserve it. What would you do to your kids if they joined a stampede?"

Jerry had to laugh. "The same thing, I guess. But what's all the celebrating about? Is it the local Fourth of July?"

"No. But I have a funny feeling that in years to come it might be. Your patient started it."

"Tabio?"

"President Anibal Tabio. He decided not to die today. He got out of bed and addressed the opening session of the Congress and called for war on the Axis."

"You're kidding me again, Matt."

"The hell I am. I was there. I saw him myself."

"But he's paralyzed, Matt."

"He spoke from a wheel chair." He told Jerry about the speech, and as they walked through the dense crowds toward a restaurant, he translated some of the signs carried by the people who swarmed on all sides of her.

"*Abajo el Eje*—that's down with the Axis. And that one says Long live the United Nations. *Mueran los Falangistas*—death to the Falangists."

"What are they, Matt?"

"The Spanish fascists. Hadn't you heard of them before?"

Jerry shook her head. "I still don't see how he got out of bed. He must have done it on nerves alone. I was at the lab all day with Marina and Tabio's X-

rays."

"He delivered a great speech, Jerry."

"I'll bet he did. I guess nothing can stop this country from joining the democracies now, Matt."

"No," he said. "Nothing but Gamburdo—if Tabio dies."

They had to wait on a street corner while a line of students carrying red torches snake-danced across their path.

"Where are we eating?" she asked.

"I know a wonderful place facing the sea wall. It's very plain, but the food is stupendous. We'll have to walk, though."

"I'm game. It's fun walking in these crowds tonight. It's almost like New Year's Eve in New York."

The restaurant was packed. The waiter had to put an extra table on the sidewalk for Hall and Jerry. "It's better from here anyway," Hall told her. "We can see the ocean and get away from the din inside."

A hundred happy men and women jammed the interior of the restaurant, singing to the music of the small orchestra, toasting the slogans which were all over San Hermano this night. Hall invited the waiter to drink a toast in sherry to Don Anibal, and then he ordered lobster salads and steaks for Jerry and himself.

"I missed you," he told Jerry and, hearing his words, he was startled to realize that he meant them.

"You're just lonely. But I like to hear you say it."

"No. I really missed you."

"What's wrong, Matt? You look all in."

"Nothing," he said. "I've had a long day. What do you think of this lobster salad?"

Small talk. Make small, polite talk about lobsters and cabbages, talk about the weather and your neighbor's garden, talk about anything before you start talking love talk and then you'll forget why you have to talk to her at all. "You're beautiful tonight," he said, softly.

"I'm ignoring you, Hall."

Good. Banter. Nice cheap café-society banter. Have to play the game as she is played; silly brittle talk about nothing. Break her down, keep her off guard, keep your own guard up. Talk about the lobster. Talk about the steak. Make vacuous wise-cracks over the coffee. Now she's pleased with the guava pastry. Be the man of the world. Talk about guava.

"You're talking down at me, Matt. I told you once before. I'm not really stupid."

"God, I'm sorry," he said. "I must have been groggy all through dinner."

"You sounded it."

"Can you walk?"

"I'm too full."

"Let's sit on the sea wall. It's the pleasantest spot in town."

Hall bought a paper from a passing newsboy. They walked along the sea wall for a block, and then he spread the paper out on top of the wall and lifted Jerry to the broad ledge. They sat facing the sea, not saying much of anything.

"The beach looks so clean," she said. "Do you think ..."

He leaped to the sand. "Take my hand," he said, "and bring the paper with you." He spread the papers on the sand, laid his jacket over the papers, and sprawled on the makeshift pallet. Jerry sat near him, took his head in her lap.

"Poor Matt! You're so tired. Want to tell me about it?"

"About what?"

She stroked his face with soft, gentle hands. "About what's bothering you, darling. Something terrible is happening to you."

"There's nothing wrong."

"You're such a bad liar, darling. I can see it in your face."

"Only that?"

"It's enough. That is, when you care for a guy."

"You're sticking your chin out, baby."

"No, I'm not. You're really a very gentle person. But you want to be hard as nails, don't you, Matt?"

"I don't know what I want to be, baby. I'd like to see the world a good place for little guys who like republics. I'd like to kill the bastards who are fouling up such a world. It sounds very big, I know. But I'm not big. I'm a little guy and I like the world of little people. Or don't I make sense?"

"I think I understand you, Matt."

"Later I'll read you Tabio's speech. Or at least the high lights, in English. You'll get a pretty good idea of the things I believe in."

"What was it like on the other side, Matt? In the war, I mean. Or don't you want to talk about the war?"

It's now or never, he thought. Tell her about the war, tell it to her straight. If she's ever going to see it, she's got to see it now. "I don't like to talk about it," he said, "but I will. I guess I owe it to you to talk about it. I was there when it started, and I kept hollering that it had started, but no one would believe me."

"In Poland?"

"Hell, no! In Madrid. The summer of '36. I reached Madrid in the fourth week of July, and by September I'd seen enough of the Nazis and the Italians to know it was World War Two." The words came easily, the whole fabric. Tabio had told the story as a historian. This was the other way it could be told, the way of the eyewitness, of the partisan. He told her everything, about the fighting in Spain and about the slaughter of the innocents; about the grotesque ballets of death and disintegration on the green tables of Geneva; about the arrows of Falange, reaching out from the festers of Spain to the New World. Everything but the role of Ansaldo.

"Now," he said, "I think you can guess why I'm so bothered about this war, why I sometimes act as if I have a very personal stake in it. Please try to understand what I mean, Jerry."

She was silent for a long moment. "I think I do," she said. "For the past few days I've been thinking about the war. Ever since—oh, you know since when. I've been thinking that if I don't do anything else, maybe I'll join the Army as a nurse when we leave here."

"You've got it bad, haven't you?"

"I don't know what I've got, darling. All I know is that I don't have the right to be a Me Firster any more. Do you think I'm right about that?"

"Baby, listen to me. You don't have to go to Bataan to get into the war. It's spread everywhere. The front stretches from Murmansk to Manila to San Hermano. And it's the same front."

"But what can I do here?"

Hall drew a deep breath. "Let's both have a cigarette," he said. "This is going to take some telling." He sat up, faced the girl, took her hands and held them firmly. "Now, what I'm going to say might sound harsh, Jerry. But you'll simply have to believe me."

"What is it, Matt?"

"How much do you know about Dr. Ansaldo?"

"Only that he's a nice guy. He's never made a pass at me, he behaves like a gentleman, and he's one crack surgeon. Don't tell me he's no good, Matt. I just won't believe it."

"You'll have to believe me," Hall insisted. "What do you know about Ansaldo's past? Do you know where he was during the Spanish War?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. Do you know?"

"Sure, I do. I saw him." Hall described his first meeting with Ansaldo. As he spoke, Jerry abruptly withdrew her hands. Trembling, she backed away from him, started to get up.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"I wish you hadn't made love to me," she said, simply. "Now I feel cheap—and used."

"Don't say that. I ..."

"You know it's true. You're not just another newspaperman. And you don't give a damn about me. It was Ansaldo you were interested in from the beginning. That's why you were on the same plane with us on the way here. And that's why you ..."

"You mean I'm a G-man? Don't be absurd."

"Don't make it worse by calling me a fool. I liked you. I liked you a lot. Don't make it worse now, Matt."

"But you're dead wrong." He tried to put his arms around her. She shook him off. "Believe me," he said, "I'm not government. You were right—but only partially—about my original interest in your party. But tonight I wish to hell it were only Ansaldo who interests me. It would make things a lot easier all around. The other morning I was watching Marina when a Spanish ship came in. Someone didn't want me to watch. I was drugged. That's why I disappeared for a few days. It damn near finished me. I've got something on Ansaldo—before I'm through I hope to have enough to hang him. I mean it literally. I'm trying to have him fitted for the same grave he thought I'd have. And it's going to be simple. What won't be simple is convincing the authorities here that you were an innocent bystander in the whole affair. Do you think I would talk to you this way if things were as you suspect they are with me?"

"I don't know what to think, Matt."

"Don't stop liking me," he said.

"Take me back to the hotel, please. I'm all confused. I want to believe you. Honestly I do. But what am I supposed to do? You give me the choice of matching one line against the other, and all the time I'll be wondering if both lines aren't fakes."

"Listen to me, baby ..."

"Don't 'baby' me. You've got sand on your jacket. No, don't, Hall. Just take me back to the hotel, please."

They walked to the sea wall in silence. Hall made a step for Jerry with his hands, boosted her to the top of the wall. "I'll try to find you a cab," he said. "But before we turn in, I'm telling you again that I'm not government. I'm exactly what I said I am. Believe me, Jerry. Please believe me."

"I don't know what to believe any more."

"But you do believe what I said about Ansaldo, don't you?"

"I don't know," she said, miserably. "Haven't you asked enough questions for one night? Show me your badge and subpoena me or something to the American Embassy and I'll tell you all I know. Which is nothing. I don't know any more than I've already told you."

Hall was flagging every passing car. "They're all private," he muttered. "We'll never get a cab tonight. And for God's sake, stop sniffling. Even if I am a G-man I won't bite you."

"You shouldn't have played me for a sucker, Hall."

"I didn't play you for anything."

"Don't say any more, Hall. Please don't."

Her attitude infuriated him. Furiously, he flagged a passing car, biting his lips in anger and frustration. He fought against yielding to his anger. "Jerry," he said, "there's one thing I'll have to ask you to do. I'm asking as a private citizen. But whatever you think I am, you'll have to do this one thing. I must insist that you don't tell Ansaldo anything about our conversation or about my having been in Spain."

"Is that an order?"

"Yes," he roared. "Yes, damn you, it's an order!"

One of the cars he had flagged slowed down, pulled over to where he stood with Jerry. But it was not a taxi. It was a small chauffeur-driven town car. The young Marques de Runa sat alone in the back seat.

"Good evening," he smiled. "Can I give you and your young lady a lift? You'll never be able to get a public car tonight."

"Thanks." Hall took Jerry's elbow, pulled her toward the door. He made the introductions, then climbed in after Jerry and shut the door. "We were just going to the Bolivar," he said.

"Were you trying to escape from the mobs?" the Marques asked.

"No. The lady has a bad cold. We thought the sea air might do it some good."

"You should try the mountain air," the Marques said. "I always take to the mountain air when I have a cold, Señor Hall. Don't you think the mountain air is better?"

Hall let the question go unanswered. He was looking into the mirror over the driver's seat, studying what he could see in the small glass of the chauffeur's face.

"The mountain air, Señor Hall."

"Oh, yes. Very dry. Perhaps the lady will try the mountain air. What do you think, Jerry?"

"No, thank you," she said, sharply. "I have hallucinations on mountain tops."

The Marques thought this was very funny. But not too unusual, he hastened to add. "For example," he said, "once when I was on a skiing week-end in Austria, three members of our party saw an apparition." He chattered amiably about the experiences on that and other skiing trips, directing his words solely to Jerry. Hall ignored them both. He was still staring at the mirror, and, after catching the chauffeur's eyes for the second time, he knew definitely that the man at the wheel was the little dog who had trailed him to the Ritz and then driven off after Ansaldo's limousine with Androtten as his passenger.

It was only when the car was less than a block from the Bolivar that Hall spoke again. "It's too bad," he said, his eyes trying to focus both on the mirror and on de Runa, "it's too bad about the Phoenix Garage blowing up today."

The chauffeur and the Marques started.

"But—why?" the Marques asked.

"Oh, I don't know. It's just that an officer in the British Embassy was telling me just the other day that the Phoenix Garage was one of the most fascinating establishments in San Hermano. I was planning to visit the garage myself tomorrow. I'm interested in garages, you know."

The chauffeur stopped the car in front of the Bolivar with an abrupt slamming of his brakes.

Hall laughed. "Your chauffeur was daydreaming, I think."

The Marques laughed, or tried to laugh, as if Hall had just made one of the funniest remarks ever heard in San Hermano. "That's what he is," the Marques laughed, "a man who dreams by day. Very good, Señor Hall. Excellent."

Hall got out of the car, helped Jerry to the street. "Thank you again for picking us up," he said. "And do something about your driver before he starts driving into people in his sleep."

The car was in gear and on its way down the street before the Marques could make his answer heard.

"What was so funny about your crack?" Jerry asked.

"I'll tell you tomorrow. Are we still friends?"

"Stop it, Matt. Just leave me alone tonight."

"Sure," he smiled. "Sleep on it. But please to keep the mouth shut, yes?"

"I'm going to my room, Matt."

"May I phone you in the morning?"

Jerry ran into the hotel without answering. Hall stood in the street for a moment, watching the receding crowds in the Plaza. They started to become a blur in his heavy eyes. He entered the lobby. Souza was going over a bill with two guests. Hall nodded to the night clerk, then went into the small bar of the Bolivar to have a drink while Souza got rid of the strangers.

Only one of the four tables in the bar room was occupied. Androtten and a San Hermano coffee dealer sat at this table, three open copper canisters between them. The Hollander was driving a hard bargain for two types of Monte Azul bean.

"Mr. Hall," he smiled, "delighted to see you healthy again. Delighted as hell."

"Healthy again?"

"Damn rumors have been spread about the hotel that you were ill, Mr. Hall. Not seriously as hell, I hope? Why don't you join us? Mr. Rendueles has been trying to make a deal with me on some fairly choice bean."

Hall downed his double Scotch. "No, thanks. I'd better get some sleep."

"Yes. You look sleepy, Mr. Hall. I wonder if we'll ever find time for—you know—my damn story. Eh?"

"One of these days," Hall said. "We'll get the complete story, Androtten. All the facts, in complete detail. Good night." He paid for his drink and went to the desk in the lobby.

"Your key," Souza said. "I have it right here."

"Thanks. What's new?"

"Oh, nothing, señor. Nothing at all." Souza was being profoundly impersonal. "I hope you are feeling better, señor. Oh, yes, message in your box."

The message was from Souza himself, and the ink was not yet dry. "I can't speak now," it read.

"Thank you. Good night." Hall put the message in his pocket and went to his room.

He flung himself across the bed, yielding to the fatigue that was tearing at every nerve and muscle in his body. In the dark, he managed to get rid of his shoes and his suit, letting them drop to the floor when he had taken them off. He tried to think of all that had happened that day, of what he would have to do tomorrow. The fading shouts of the crowds in the Plaza grew fainter. The bed grew softer. He fell asleep.

The phone bell woke him in a few minutes. Souza was calling. "Señor Hall, the drinks you ordered are on the way upstairs," he said. "I am sorry for the delay, but we have a new waiter, and he is not accustomed to our system yet."

"Oh, I get it." The *cabrón* of a night waiter was gone. The invisible, detested *cabrón* whom Hall had never seen. He half expected Miguelito or Juan Antonio to be standing in the hall when he heard the knock on the door. Instead, there was a short, swarthy man in his forties, balancing a tray of brandy and soda in his right hand, a professional waiter down to his flat feet and his bland smile.

"Shall I bring it in, señor?"

"Please. Set it down here, on the little table."

The waiter closed the door, put the tray down. "*Compañero* Hall," he said, the bland smile gone, "permit me to introduce myself. I am Emilio Vicente, delegate of the Waiters' Union." He shook Hall's hand, then gave him a calling card. It was Major Segador's private card.

"Turn it over, *Compañero* Hall."

The short message on the reverse side indicated that Hall was to trust Vicente.

"I am happy to know you," Hall said. "Will you have a drink with me?"

"Some other time, *compañero*. Tonight I have a message. Major Segador suggests that should you need any assistance in a hurry, you can call upon me. I am at your orders."

"Thank you."

Emilio Vicente picked up his tray. "*Compañero*," he said, "it might seem a little dangerous, but the Major assured us that you do not lack for *cojones*."

"What?"

"Good night, *Compañero* Hall. You look as if you could use some sleep."

Chapter twelve

Hall slept through the morning. He rose at noon, staggered into a cold tub, and then ordered a breakfast of steak and eggs. Vicente wheeled the table into the room.

"I have been thinking of the major's offer," Hall said. "There's something you can do for me. Do you know anything about the Marques de Runa?"

"Yes. He's a Falangist. His family owns one of the biggest import and export companies in the country. The young one works there, too."

"What is he up to now?"

"Perhaps we can find out."

"Good. Do you know anything about his chauffeur?"

"No. But we can find out."

"Do you mind if I ask Pepe Delgado to check up too?"

"Not at all, *compañero*. He is very reliable."

San Hermano had settled back to her old routines when Hall left his room. The trolleys ran, cars moved along all the streets, the loud speakers on the poles and buildings had been taken down, and street sweepers were groaning over the litter of signs and papers they themselves had helped scatter over the whole city the day before. Yesterday's crowds had gone back to their jobs, their homes, their own quarters.

The papers had little news about Tabio's condition. They carried his speech and, in most cases, described the events which had followed Tabio's speech as a spontaneous demonstration on the part of the people. *El Imparcial* merely said that a great crowd had heard the speech over the public amplifiers and that Red hoodlums had severely beaten some anti-communists who had joined the crowd in the Plaza to listen to the address of the President.

Hall scanned the papers at a café table in Old San Hermano while Pepe went to telephone some friends who were doing some further checking on the Marques de Runa. The information Pepe received over the telephone was very brief. At six o'clock that morning, the Marques de Runa and his chauffeur had taken a plane for Natal from the San Hermano airport.

"Wait for me in the car." Hall went to a phone himself, called Margaret Skidmore.

"Hi, Pirate," she said. "Getting lonesome for the farm?"

"Sure. How about you?"

"I can't get away this week," she said. "How about the week-end?"

"I'll have to let you know tomorrow. Tell me, Margaret, how well do you know the Marques de Runa?"

"Very well. Why?"

"Oh, nothing much. I left my notebook in his car last night, I think."

"I know. He told me."

"About the notebook?"

"No. About your red-headed girl friend. She sounds like a good substitute for farming."

"Cut it out," Hall laughed.

"Is she the gal you were dreaming about at the wrong time one day last week?"

"No. But about my notebook. It's not too important, but I had some interesting things in it, Margaret. I was wondering how to reach the Marques."

"It would be impossible today," she said. "He just left for Barcelona on a business trip."

"Is he a good friend of yours?"

"Freddie? He's my fiancé."

"You're kidding!"

"No. I'm to be the Marquesa de Runa. Didn't you know?"

"Does anyone else know it?"

"Yes," she said. "He does. Now don't start cross-examining me about that! It's my affair."

"I won't. You always know what you're doing."

"Thanks. I feel like doing some plowing over the week-end. With you. Let's talk about it then, if it still interests you. And in the meanwhile, I'll have someone look through the car for your notebook."

"Thanks a lot."

Hall went to the car. "Let's go back to the hotel," he said, "and find Souza. Or is the day clerk reliable?"

"Don't worry," Pepe said. "Arturo can be trusted. That's why Souza got him the job."

"We have a lot to do, Pepe. I want to search the room of the Dutchman, Androtten. We'll need all the help we can get."

They found the task very simple. Androtten had left that morning with a small handbag on what he described to the clerk as a two-day buying trip in the south. With the day clerk standing guard at the phone and Vicente lounging in the hall to sound any needed alarm, Hall and Pepe entered the Dutchman's room with a pass key and drew the blinds.

There was a picture of Androtten and what was evidently his family in a portable leather frame on the bureau. It showed Androtten and a fat blond matron sitting at a table, with a youth in his teens at Androtten's left and a little girl leaning at the woman's knee. "He's a family man," Pepe said.

"We'll see." Hall went through the wastebasket, the clothes hanging in the closet, every drawer in the bureau. He examined every piece of luggage for false sides and bottoms, hidden compartments, and stray papers. In the traveling bag he found in the closet, Hall discovered a heavy brown envelope. Inside was the picture of a young colonial Netherlands officer and a letter from the Dutch Government-in-Exile. The letter regretted to inform Androtten that his esteemed son, Lieutenant Wilhelm Androtten II, had perished fighting the Nazi invaders in the battle for the Lowlands, and had been posthumously awarded the second highest decoration the Queen gave such heroes. Hall had to guess at the contents of the letter, using his German as a basis for deciphering the Dutch.

"Does this look like that boy grown up?" he asked Pepe.

"I think so, Mateo. What does the letter say?"

Hall gave him the gist of the letter as he understood it. "But I still think he's a fraud, Pepe. Let's examine the labels on his clothes again."

The labels revealed only what Androtten had already indicated. London, Amsterdam, New Orleans, Rio. He had purchased no clothes in San Hermano.

"Let's get out of here, Pepe."

"Where are you going now?"

"I've got to write a letter in my room. But wait for me. I think we're going to visit Duarte when I've got the letter finished."

His own room, he soon discovered, had also been searched that day. The lock on his traveling bag had been picked, and the stethoscope was missing. He flung the new straw hat in the closet and went to the lobby. Pepe was talking to the day clerk. He grinned at Hall, asked, "So soon?"

"I changed my mind." Then, to the clerk, "Where is Miss Olmstead? At the University laboratory?"

"No, señor. She went to the country with the two doctors."

"Do you know where exactly?"

"No. Only that she went to the country. They will not be back tonight. They left an hour ago."

"Come on, Pepe. We have to get started."

They sat down in the car. "First stop the Mexican Embassy," Hall said. "But wait there for me. I won't be too long."

"What happened?"

"My room was searched. The stethoscope is missing."

"That means trouble, Mateo."

"Sure. It also means that someone was careless. Where the hell were Arturo and Vicente?"

"It's a big hotel, Mateo. We were talking about it only this morning. Duarte wants you to stay with him in his house for the night."

"What do you think about it?"

"Duarte is right."

"But I have a good gun, Pepe. And good friends."

"I know that, Mateo. But stay with Duarte tonight. I think that tonight someone else should sleep in your bed. Duarte suggested three pillows or a log. Then, in the morning, if there are no bullet holes in the pillows ..."

"Or the log ..."

"... or the log, then you can say it was a mistake to sleep at Duarte's house tonight. Someone followed me this morning, Mateo. I drove him crazy, but I couldn't get a look at him myself. It was very funny. But it is also serious."

Hall put the gun back in his pocket. "Maybe it is," he said. "I'll stay with Duarte."

"It is the right thing to do, Mateo. I'll leave you with Duarte. I have to see Souza and some other friends tonight."

Pepe waited at the curb until Hall was admitted to the Mexican Embassy. Then, his eyes sweeping the streets for signs of anyone shadowing him on

foot or by automobile, he took the most roundabout route he could devise to reach the Transport Workers' Union headquarters.

Duarte had had no word from General Mograd. "I'm sure he met the courier," he told Hall. "But I'm worried by his silence. It is not like him."

"Give him another night, Felipe. In the meanwhile, I'll send another letter to Havana. I just can't believe that the evidence on Ansaldo is not available on this side of the ocean. If it's nowhere else, it must be in Havana."

"Why are you so sure?"

"Because I know Havana. I know what the Spanish Republicans and the secret police must have there. I tell you, Felipe, we can hang Ansaldo in Havana. Do you remember where and how I first saw Ansaldo in Burgos? Well, there was a photographer standing and working in front of me for hours that day. I know who he was, Felipe. He was the man from *Arriba*. I don't doubt but that either the Spaniards or the Cubans have a complete file of *Arriba* in Havana. And I'm willing to bet my bottom dollar that I'll find those pictures of Ansaldo in that file."

"I hope so, Mateo. But I hope you don't have to go. Are you very tired?"

"I could stand an hour's sleep before dinner."

"We'll go to the house. Dr. Gonzales might join us for dinner. And Lavandero is going to try to join us after dinner."

They went to Duarte's house in one of the Embassy's cars. Hall stretched out on the couch under the mural of Madrid and fell asleep in a few minutes. It was some while before he was rested enough to dream, and then the figures in the mural above the couch began to move through his sleep in a macabre procession.

Duarte woke him in an hour. "Twice you yelled in your sleep," he said. "And then you started to twist like a chained snake. Bad dreams, Mateo?"

"I guess so," Hall said, his fingers working the muscles at the back of his neck. "I always dream about the bombardments when I feel bad."

"Gonzales and Lavandero can't meet us tonight. They're both at the Presidencia. I think Tabio is getting weaker."

"Is that what they told you?"

"No. They just said they couldn't meet us."

"Too bad. What have you got cooking?"

"I don't know, *amigo*. I hired a new cook and she won't allow me to put my face in the kitchen."

"She must be a smart cook."

"We'll find out in a few minutes. I forgot to tell you, but Gonzales had some news for us tonight. He says that Gamburdo is planning to delay the actual start of Congress for another week. His game is to allow the present high feelings of the people to cool down a bit before the Congress starts its business."

Hall was puzzled. "I don't quite understand the maneuver," he said.

"The Congress has to choose a delegation for the Inter-American parley, and to compose its mandate. Gamburdo still wants a delegation committed to neutrality."

"Can he get away with it?"

"Who knows? He was a long way toward success when Don Anibal stopped him. The real question is how long can Don Anibal be counted on to get out

of bed and fight for an anti-fascist war policy?"

A soft rain had started to fall while Hall was sleeping. It splashed gently against the open shutters of the cottage, embracing the house, the palms and the papaya trees on the grounds, its soft rhythms throwing Hall into a small boy's melancholy. He talked little during dinner, and when he did, it was to subject Duarte to his reminiscences of rainy days when he was very young.

They swapped yarns for hours, listened to Duarte's endless collection of Mexican and flamenco records, and killed a bottle of black rum.

"I'm going to sleep until noon," Hall said when they quit for the night.

But his sleep was cut short very early in the morning by Pepe, who arrived with the news that Jerry had returned from the country late at night and was trying desperately to contact Hall.

He phoned her at once.

"Matt," she said, "can you come over right away? I think that I owe you an apology."

Jerry was waiting for him in her room. She had not had any sleep for a full night, and her eyes showed it. Hall noticed that the two ash trays in the room were filled to the rims with fresh cigarette stumps.

"What's up?" he asked.

"I'm out of cigarettes. Have you got any?"

"Only Cubans. They're very strong."

She accepted one, choked a bit on the first puff, then continued smoking.

"Give," he said. "What happened?"

"You were right, I think. I can't swear to it, but I'm sure I recognized his voice. The little Dutchman, I mean."

"Androtten?"

She nodded. "He was at the ranch. I'm certain of it."

"Wait a minute, baby. Sit down. Relax. Now start from the beginning. What ranch?"

"Oh, I thought you knew. I went to Gamburdo's brother's ranch with Ansaldo and Marina. Doctor was ripping mad. There was entirely too much interference in the Tabio case, he said, and he'd called for a showdown. He said he was going to stay on the ranch for a few days, or at least until the politicians who were interfering with him would come to their senses. He said we'd all just take a holiday until we could go back to work."

"Who else was at the ranch?"

"Gamburdo's brother, two men I've never seen before, and our hostess."

"Were you introduced to the two men?"

"No, that's just it. They were not there when we arrived. They came on horseback after we'd been there for some hours. Señora Gamburdo said they were merely neighbors who wanted to talk over a cattle deal with her husband."

"And what makes you think she was lying?"

"I can't say, exactly, Matt. I didn't like the way she explained them to me—it was as if she felt that I insisted upon an explanation. That was when I decided to tell Ansaldo that I wanted to come back to town this morning. I told him there was some shopping I'd neglected. He didn't seem to object at the time."

"When did Androtten arrive?"

"I don't know. I told you—I didn't see him. I just heard his voice. It was about five in the afternoon, I'd say. I was taking a dip in the pool—alone. There was a puppy playing around the pool. He found one of my red beach shoes and started to chew on it. Then he took the shoe in his mouth and carried it over to the side of the house and left it near a hedge.

"It was when I went for the shoe that I heard Androtten. Some sort of a conference was going on in the room above the spot where the pooch had dropped my shoe. I recognized the voices of Ansaldo and Marina and the two others. But most of the talking was being done by a new voice. I thought I recognized it. Then he stopped speaking Spanish and switched to German. I'm sure it was German."

"What was he saying?"

"I couldn't make it out. But he was very angry."

"And it was Androtten?"

"Definitely."

"Could you see into the room?"

"No. I didn't try, anyway. I was afraid. I just picked up my shoe and beat it."

Hall hesitated. He gave Jerry a fresh cigarette, lit it for her. "Could they have seen you?" he asked.

She shook her head. "But that's not the end of it," she said. "After dinner, Ansaldo took me for a walk in the garden. He made a lot of small talk about different cases. Then he asked me why I insisted upon returning to town. I told him again that I wanted to buy some things to take home for friends. He was very pleasant about it. He asked me, half-seriously, if the real

reason I wanted to go back was because I had a date with you. He was acting the part of a jealous lover when he said it."

"Acting?"

"I'm sure he was only acting. Because when he said that I just laughed and said, 'Good heavens, no, doctor! The last time I saw Hall he said he was going to make a small fortune writing the story of that little Dutchman's experience with the Japs, and my guess is that he'll be spending the next few days locked up in his room with the Dutchman.'

"Ansaldo stopped dead in his tracks when I said that, Matt. He asked me which Dutchman I mean—but only after he had caught his breath."

"What did he say when you told him you meant Androtten?"

"Nothing much. He made a joke—a bad one—about Flying Dutchmen. And then he continued talking about medical cases."

"And that was the last you saw of him?"

"Just about. My train left at five-thirty this morning. He was asleep when I left."

"Who drove you to the station?"

"Marina and a ranch hand. Marina was glad to see me go. He hates to see me around Ansaldo."

"Why? Is Ansaldo also a fairy?"

"God, no!" Jerry laughed. "He's anything but."

"You're exhausted. Let me get you some breakfast," he said. "And then, when you catch your second wind, maybe you'll remember some other details."

"I'm sure I've told you everything, Matt."

He picked up the phone, asked for Vicente. "Ham and eggs?" he asked Jerry.

"No. Just coffee and toast."

Hall gave Vicente the order. "And one other thing," he told the waiter. "The woman is in trouble. Some one will have to keep an eye on her today. And let me know when the fat little foreigner on this floor returns to town. He is a dangerous enemy."

"All those words for coffee and toast?" Jerry asked. "I've learned a few words, Matt. I know that *mujer* is woman."

"Good for you. I was asking him about his wife. She's been ill."

"Oh." Jerry relaxed in her chair. "Tell me, Matt. What was it all about at the ranch? There was something wrong there. I know. Why should Ansaldo have wanted me around? And who is Androtten?"

"That's a big order, baby. There's only one thing I definitely know about it. I know that Ansaldo is a hot shot in the Falange. I know that two Falange agents arrived in San Hermano on board a Spanish ship the other day, and that they were traced to the ranch. But I can only guess that the two neighboring *estancieros* you saw were these two visiting Falange agents."

"And Androtten?"

"Again I'm guessing. I know that a Nazi general named Wilhelm von Faupel is the man who actually runs the Falange. I know something about the way the Nazis work. O.K. So I assume that Androtten—if it really was Androtten whose voice you heard—is a Gestapo agent. That would make sense. Hitler orders Tabio's death; the job is handed to Hitler's Falange, and a Gestapo officer tags along to run the show in San Hermano as his

comrades run it in Spain. It would all make sense if we could prove that the two visiting *estancieros* were the Falange agents off the *Marques de Avillar*, and that Androtten was the man you heard."

"Then why should they have wanted me around?" Jerry asked.

There was a gentle rap on the door. "Time out for coffee," Hall smiled. "*Entrada!*"

The door was unlocked. The handle turned, and Wilhelm Androtten entered. He took off his small Panama hat, fanned his red, puffy face with it. "Ah," he sighed, "they told me at the desk that I would find you here, Mr. Hall. Hot as hell, isn't it?" He put a large coffee canister on the arm of a chair. "May I sit down?" he asked.

"Of course." Hall glanced at Jerry, whose fingers were clenched tightly on a large amber comb. "What can I do for you?"

Androtten put the canister on his lap. "Oh, my dear Mr. Hall," he sighed, his pudgy right hand resting on the lid of his tin. "I just wanted to tell you that I am leaving for Rio on an extended buying trip tomorrow. If you still are interested in my damn story, perhaps you could spare me some time this afternoon, eh?"

"I think it could be managed," Hall smiled. "Did you buy all the damn Monte Azul bean you wanted, sir?"

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes indeed, Mr. Hall. Fine, rich, full-bodied bean, fragrant as hell. Please, I'll show you." Androtten opened the canister. There was no coffee under the lid. Instead, there was a small automatic pistol, equipped with a gleaming silencer.

"Please," Androtten sighed, "no noise, please. I should hate to be forced to shoot you both."

Jerry stifled a muted cry. "You wouldn't dare," Hall said.

"You are a fool, Hall. I hope you have already noticed that my gun is equipped with the only silencer in this jungle of Indians and blackamoors."

"The Gestapo—you Nazis think of everything, don't you?" Hall said in a rising voice.

"I must remind you again not to shout, Hall. Please, lock your hands on top of your head."

Hall obeyed the order.

"If the nurse co-operates, she will be spared."

"For God's sake, Jerry, do anything the Nazi orders," Hall cried. "He has a gun!"

The little man with the gun angrily raised a finger to his lips. "Not one word out of you," he whispered. He got out of the chair, started backing toward the door. "Now," he said, "listen carefully, both of you. For your information, Hall, I am not Gestapo. I am from the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin. And that, I am afraid, is the last information you will ever receive about anything, Hall."

The comb in Jerry's hand snapped with a dry little crack. The sudden noise startled Androtten. He raised the gun and fired just as Hall dove for his feet. Three times the cough of a silenced gun sounded in the room. The shots seemed to come all together. A split second after the third shot was fired Hall had kicked the gun from the limp hand of the Nazi and was sitting astride his chest with his hands locked on Androtten's throat. He was oblivious to the noise at the balcony, to Jerry, to everything but the man dying under him.

A gentle hand tugged at Hall's shoulder. "Enough, Mateo. The *cabrón* is dead."

Emilio Vicente had climbed into the room from the balcony. He had a pistol in his hand. "The woman," he said. "She has fainted."

Jerry was lying in a heap on the floor near her chair. "Christ, she was hit!" Hall rushed to her side, examined her for bullet wounds.

"No, Mateo. His bullet sailed over my head. My bullets both hit him. I aimed for the heart. See, you are covered with his blood, no?"

"Water." Hall was sitting on the floor, Jerry's head in his lap, a hand clasped firmly over her mouth. He dipped a handkerchief into the glass Vicente gave him, ran it over her face. "Jerry," he whispered, "promise me you won't yell if I take my hand away? Everything is all right. His shot missed us both, and now he's under control."

She nodded. "I'm sorry I passed out," she said.

"You're O.K. now."

Vicente, standing over them, grinned at the girl. "*Sí*, you *magnífica*," he said. "You make boom noise of comb. She"—he pointed to Androtten, who lay under a blanket Vicente had found while Hall was reviving Jerry—"she have much scare of boom, she shoot much badly. Me, Emilio, shoot much good. She no good no more."

"Is he dead? *Muerto?*"

"Much dead." Vicente showed them his pistol. He pointed to his own silencer. "I heard the son of a whore mother," he said to Hall, a sardonic smile on his grim face. "When he gets to hell he will learn that there were other silencers in this jungle."

"You heard everything?"

"But naturally, *compañero*. I followed him to the door and listened. When you shouted to the woman that the Nazi had a gun, I knew you were shouting for me. I have a gun, too. And a pass key. So I rushed into the next room and climbed over to the balcony. It was not difficult."

"You were very good. You saved our lives."

"It is nothing."

"I can get up, Matt," Jerry said. "I'd rather sit in the chair."

Hall helped her to the chair, told her what Vicente had done. Vicente laughed at Hall's account of his heroism. "It was nothing," he repeated. "The Nazi was too fat to miss."

"He's very messy," Hall said, looking at the blanket.

"What are you going to do with the body?" Hall asked Vicente.

"Feed it to the sharks."

"Better fingerprint him and make photos of the face, first," Hall advised. "And let Segador know immediately."

"Be tranquil, *compañero*. All in good time. When you and the woman leave, Pepe and I shall put the remains of this dog in a laundry basket and get it out of here." Vicente looked at Jerry. "And I think you had better get her out of this room. She is going to get sick if she stays here."

"You're right." Hall gave Jerry his hand. "Come on, nurse," he smiled. "We're going to my room. This is no place for a lady." He helped her to her feet.

She held her hand out to Vicente. "You are very sweet," she said. "*Usted mucho dulce.* Understand?"

"Understand," he laughed. He kissed her hand.

Hall had a bottle of brandy in his room. He poured two stiff drinks for Jerry and himself. "Feel any better?" he asked.

"It was awful for a few minutes. I was afraid he would kill you."

"So was I, baby. I was afraid he'd kill me before I ever got around to telling you how I felt. About you, I mean."

"How do you feel about me?"

He filled the glasses again. "Still think I'm a cop?"

"I don't care. I guess you aren't, though."

"Right."

"I'd have died if he killed you. I love you, Matt."

She was sitting on the edge of the bed. He stood over her, took the glass from her hand. "You know how I feel, then," he smiled.

"Darling," she said, raising her face, "didn't you think that I knew?"

"Wait," he laughed. "I'm filthy with his blood. I'd better change my clothes."

He found a fresh suit and a clean shirt in his closet. "I'll change in there," he said.

"Darling," she said, while he was changing, "I still can't figure out why Ansaldo wanted me at the ranch."

"I think I can, baby. It's not so hard. Figure it out for yourself. The beautiful American nurse is a complete political innocent. Sees all, knows nothing. A perfect set-up. The Falangist doctors take you along to San Hermano. You sit in the sickroom while Ansaldo examines Tabio. You yourself work on the smears and the slides in the laboratory. You are the clean, unbiased witness who can testify that scientifically all was on the up and up. Your existence is proof that Ansaldo's visit was legitimate. If anything was shady, he'd bring a Falangist nurse."

"But why was I brought to the ranch?"

"Same reasoning. Lavandero blocks Ansaldo's plans. Meanwhile, the Falange sends two agents from Spain with the latest orders for Ansaldo. He has to sneak out of town to confer with them. So does Androtten, the Nazi boss of the expedition. Again Ansaldo takes the unbiased, non-political nurse along. She is still the witness. She sees nothing wrong at the ranch, and, after Ansaldo puts Tabio in the grave, if anyone starts to suspect anything, they question the obviously innocent American nurse and she backs Ansaldo's story. She really hasn't seen a thing."

"That is," Jerry said, "until the dumb American nurse stood under the wrong window and heard Joe Nazi himself."

"Exactly."

"Then you think they know that I heard Androtten?"

"I can't say. But just to play safe, you're moving out of this hotel to where they can't find you. And right away. Not that they're not prepared. Remember, you didn't *see* Androtten. They know that much. By now you can bet your bottom dollar that they have a coffee planter three hundred miles from the Gamburdo ranch who will swear on a stack of Bibles that

Androtten was with him for the past three days, and a whole slew of witnesses to back him up."

"But won't it make them suspicious if I move?"

"The hell with them, baby. It's you that counts now."

"Then I'm staying. I won't spoil it for you by playing into their hands."

Hall took her in his arms. "You're wonderful," he said. "But ..."

The phone began to ring. It was Dr. Gonzales. "Can you come over to the Presidencia at once?" he asked. "Yes, very important. I am in Don Anibal's apartment. Please, hurry."

"I'll be right over."

"What is it, Matt?"

"Come on. We're going to the Presidencia. It sounds like the end."

Chapter thirteen

The private elevator in the Presidencia was both carpeted and bullet-proof, as it had been in General Segura's day. But the magnificent bronze friezes of General Segura's capture of San Hermano had long since been melted down to make medals, and in place of the martial friezes there now hung a series of water colors painted by grade-school children in the small villages. Every year, Hall explained to Jerry as the car climbed to the fourth floor, a committee of the Republic's leading artists chose twenty water colors submitted by the schools for a place in this elevator. The students whose pictures were chosen received medals made from the bronze frieze which had originally hung in their places.

Gonzales was waiting for them at the fourth-floor landing. "Are you all right?" he asked Jerry, and without waiting for an answer he took Hall's arm and started to walk down the long gilded corridor toward the private library of the President.

The library was large, perhaps forty feet square, the four walls were lined with books from floor to ceiling. In one corner was an immense mahogany writing table, clean now except for a drinking glass packed with sharpened pencils and a large yellow foolscap pad. When Tabio was well, this table was always piled high with books, most of them opened and kept in place by an inkwell, a heavy watch, or another book. Today there were no books on Don Anibal's table; instead, almost as if in explanation, a padded steel and aluminum wheel chair stood empty near the little corridor which led to the door of the President's bedroom.

"Please, sit down." Gonzales indicated two leather chairs.

"I'm in the way," Jerry said. "I don't belong here."

"I had to take her along," Hall said. "It was a matter of her life. Is there some place where she can rest while we—while we talk?"

"Excuse me. I will make the arrangement." Gonzales stepped out of the room.

"What's happening?" Jerry asked.

"I don't know. It looks bad. Whatever it is, don't cave in on me now. It won't do anyone any good."

"I'm all right now. But I'll probably have nightmares about today for the rest of my life."

Gonzales returned to the library with a middle-aged maid in a simple uniform. "Please, nurse," he said, "this lady will escort you to a quiet apartment. You will find brandy and a bed. I hope you will forgive us and find comfort." His blue lips tried to smile at Jerry as she followed the maid out of the library.

"You're not well," Hall said.

The blue lips tightened. "I'm a cardiac, you know. But it is not of importance. Simon Tabio will join us in a moment. It is very serious, *compañero*."

"Don Anibal?"

"Yes. Simon will tell you about the new development. He is young, but he is very strong. He knows that Gamburdo is a traitor."

"Has he told Don Anibal?"

"The mere telling might kill him. We must have the proof before we tell him."

"The proof?" Hall started to tell the ailing doctor about Androtten when Simon Tabio entered the library.

"Ah, Simon. This is *Compañero* Mateo Hall."

"How do you do?" the boy said, in English. "I regret that we must meet under such sad circumstances."

"*El habla castellano, chico*," Gonzales said.

"The sorrow weighs with equal weight in my own heart," Hall said.

"*Compañero* Hall was on the point of telling me some important news when you came in, Simon. I think you should hear it."

"I would like to hear it," Simon said.

"Do you know about Corbeta the Falange agent and Jimenez the C.T.E. radio operator being at the Gamburdo ranch with Ansaldo?"

"Yes. Segador has kept me informed."

"There was one other man at the ranch with them, a Nazi. An agent of the Ibero-American Institute named Androtten. At least that was the name he used. He reached San Hermano on the same plane which brought Ansaldo and me." Hall told them of Jerry's accidental discovery and of the events which followed and brought about the death of the Nazi. He told it in very few words, his eyes taking in the uncanny resemblance between Simon and his father.

"My father is very ill, señor. We must be able to prove your story for him."

"He is my friend," Hall said. "He will believe me."

"He is very ill. I believe you, of course. But what proof have we for my father that Androtten was a Nazi agent? If you know my father at all well, señor, you must surely know his passion for the truth. And we must remember that in his illness ..." The boy's voice trailed off to nothingness, and he turned away from his elders.

"I think," Gonzales said, gently, "I think that you had better tell *Compañero* Hall about what happened this morning."

Simon Bolivar Tabio dabbed at his reddened eyes with a white handkerchief. "They are killing him," he said, brokenly. He paused to swallow the painful lump in his throat, ashamed before the friends of his father for his weakness.

"There are many tears in San Hermano for Don Anibal," Hall said. "You should be proud of your own."

"This morning," Simon said, "Dr. Marina arrived here with a written message for my mother from Dr. Ansaldo. The surgeon refused to operate without the written permission of the entire Cabinet. He says in the note that he refuses to predict how long my father can live without an operation. He says that the operation must be performed immediately."

"It is murder," Gonzales said. "Every doctor in San Hermano who has examined Don Anibal swears that he is too weak to undergo an operation right now."

"He sent a copy of the note to each member of the Cabinet," Simon said. "They refuse to discuss the question without my father's permission."

"The dirty bastard," Hall said.

"We were discussing you this morning," Gonzales said. "Lavandero and Simon and myself. We think that if we get no further actual proof, we will

have to place a great burden on your shoulders, *Compañero* Hall. Don Anibal trusts you."

"Do you want me to tell Don Anibal what I know?"

"Not immediately. It would be too great a shock. Don Anibal would demand proof even from you. But if he hears from you that you are here to investigate the Falange and then if, say tomorrow, you come back and tell him that you have run across some important information, perhaps ..."

"But have we time to break it to him in easy stages? Is his—health—adequate?"

"It is a chance we are forced to take," Simon said. "My father's health is not —adequate—for a sudden shock."

"You may be right. I have already notified Segador about Androtten. Perhaps by tomorrow he will have established Androtten's real identity."

"Then you will see my father now?"

"I will do anything you ask, *compañero*."

"Excuse me, then." Simon left the library.

"Don Anibal is not going to live," Gonzales said when the boy left. "Not even a miracle can save his life."

The doctor was tearing the stopper from a small vial of adrenalin. He held the open mouth of the vial to his nose and breathed deeply.

"Adrenalin?" Hall asked.

"It is nothing, *compañero*. Say nothing to Simon, please." A corner of his blue underlip was growing purple in tiny spots. "I hear him now, Mateo."

The boy carried his shoulders proudly when he returned to the library. "My father is sitting up in bed," he said. "He is preparing a radio speech to the entire Republic."

Dr. Gonzales was incredulous. "Are you sure, *chico*?"

Simon touched his right eye with his index finger. "I have seen it at this moment. My father is a great and a brave man. He says that we should bring *Compañero* Hall in at once."

The door leading to Tabio's room was opened by an armed army sergeant. "The President will see you now," he said.

Hall followed Simon and Gonzales through the small corridor which took them to the sick room. The shutters were opened, and the sun streamed into the chamber, bathing everyone and everything in its gentle light. Anibal Tabio was sitting up in bed, his hand raised in a familiar gesture as he dictated to a secretary who sat on a stool near his pillows.

"Neutrality," he was dictating, "neutrality is either abject surrender to Hitler or an open admission of complicity with the fascist Axis or a sinful combination of both..."

The swarthy Esteban Lavandero was, as always, at Tabio's side, his fierce Moorish face twisted with pain and love. He stood behind the girl secretary, one black hairy hand resting on the carved headboard of the ancient bed, his ears cocked for every word which came from Tabio's pale lips.

Tabio's wife and two doctors in white coats stood on the other side of the bed. The prim white collar of her dark dress matched the streaks of white in her long black hair. Her luminous *mestiza's* eyes, swollen from quiet weeping, were now bright and clear, and when Anibal Tabio looked to his wife after turning a particularly telling phrase in his speech her generous

lips parted and she smiled at him the way she had smiled to reward his earliest writings three decades ago.

"The great North American martyr to freedom, Don Abraham Lincoln, a man of great dignity whose humor was the humor of the people from whose loins he sprang, was a man who many years ago described such neutrality. Lincoln was not a neutral in the struggle between slavery and freedom. And when some fool insisted that most Americans were neutral in this struggle, Lincoln replied with the anecdote of the American woman who went for a walk in the woods and found her husband fighting with a wild bear. Being a neutral, this woman stood by and shouted, 'Bravo, Husband. Bravo, Bear.'

"And then, Lincoln said ..."

"Don Anibal," one of the doctors said, gently, "I must implore you ..." The restraining hand of Tabio's wife made him stop.

"It is no use, doctor," Tabio smiled. "At a time like this, if a President can speak at all, he must speak to his people. Tonight you will type my speech, and tomorrow you can bring the microphone right into this room, and right from my bed I shall talk to the people. If I am to die in any event, it will not matter much. And if I am to live, doctor, the speech will not kill me."

Simon, who was standing next to Hall in the doorway, whispered that Tabio's eyes were too weak to distinguish them at that distance. They started to walk toward the bed on their toes, and Hall, glancing at Tabio sitting up in the old bed in a white hospital gown surrounded by the burly Lavandero and his wife and son, was suddenly struck by the similarity of the scene which was before him and the Doré engraving of the death of Don Quixote. It was all there, even to the faithful Sancho Panza figure of Lavandero, and at that moment Hall knew why Spanish savants had for hundreds of years written scores of books on the true significance of Cervantes' classic. Here were the two great impulses of the Hispanic world,

the fragile, gentle, trusting dreamer of great new horizons and at his side the broad-backed practical man of earth who threw his strength into the effort of implementing the dreams and making them the new realities. Here was the visionary Juarez and the young soldier Porfirio Diaz, when the warrior was still a man untainted by his own betrayal of a people's dream. Here was the romantic poet José Marti and one of his durable guerrilla generals, Maximo Gomez or Antonio Maceo, whose white and black skins, blended, would have yielded a skin the color of Lavandero's. (Was it any wonder, then, Hall thought in those fleeting seconds before Tabio recognized him, that Tabio as a young exile went to Cuba to write a biography of Marti while his faithful fellow-exile spent the same months in Havana writing an equally good study of Maceo?)

At that moment Tabio saw Hall. "*Viejo!*" he said, happily. "Mateo Hall, a good friend and thank God never a neutral. Señorita, give him your stool. Come, sit down, Mateo."

Hall took his hand, tenderly, for fear of hurting him. It was a thin hand, bony and fleshless; cold, as though Death had already touched it.

"*Viejo,*" Tabio said. He might have been genially scolding a favorite child. "Say something, old friend, and don't sit there staring at me as if I were already a corpse. Tell me about yourself, Mateo. We've come a long way since Geneva and Madrid and the day they fished you out of the ocean, eh?"

"It has been a long time," Hall said. "A very long time, Don Anibal. A century."

Tabio smiled. "Time is of no matter. It is the present and the future which counts, eh, *viejo*?"

"Of course, *ilustre*."

"My family and my good friends are afraid that I am dying," Tabio said, smiling as if at some secret joke he wanted to share with Hall. "I am an old dog. An old prison dog. Tell them, *viejo*, tell them that our breed doesn't die so easily, no?"

Hall could only nod and pat the sick man's hand.

"Do I sound like a dying man?"

Hall swallowed hard, managed to grin. "You? What nonsense, Don Anibal! I was at the Congress the other day. I watched you and listened to you speak. It was a great speech, Anibal."

"It was not a great speech. But it was good because I spoke the truth. And do you know, Mateo, that the truth is better than any great speech?" Tabio was breathing with increased difficulty. He slumped back against the pillows, but out of the corner of his eye he saw the doctors quicken, and he turned to them and winked. "Not yet," he smiled. Meekly, he allowed one of the doctors to hold a tumbler of colored liquid under his mouth. He sipped some of it through a bent glass tube, then turned to Hall again.

"Where were you sitting?" he asked.

"In the diplomatic box with Duarte and the Mexican Ambassador. Don't try to talk to me, Anibal. Save your strength. I'll be here for a long time, and when you're out of bed and on your feet again, perhaps we can have a real visit and sit up all night talking as we used to talk."

"Mateo! You talk like a child. I will never be on my feet again. But just the same," and he winked impishly at his wife, "I'm a long way from dying."

"Of course you are," Hall insisted.

"There, you see?" Tabio said to everyone in the room. "Mateo can tell you. He knows how tough our breed is. Tell me, Mateo, is it true that the

American Ambassador considers me to be the most violent Bolshevik outside of Russia?"

Lavandero laughed, and Hall laughed, and when Tabio, laughing, turned to his wife and son, they laughed too.

"He is such a pompous fool, that Ambassador. Oh, I am being terribly undiplomatic, *viejo*, but to think of an old-fashioned bourgeois reformer like me being compared to Lenin and Stalin! It is the height of confusion. But if you ever meet him you can tell him that I admire Stalin and the Russian people. Your Ambassador and I were together at a State dinner the day the Nazis invaded Russia and he said that the Soviets would be crushed in a month and that he was glad. I told him then that the Red Army would destroy the Nazi war machine and I told him that before the war was over the United States would be fighting on the side of Russia and that therefore it was dangerous of him to say he was glad so many Red Army soldiers were being killed. And you can tell him that some day when I speak to Mr. Roosevelt again I will tell him what the American Ambassador to our country said openly in June of 1941."

"Please, Don Anibal," one of the doctors begged, "you must save your strength."

"For the speech," Lavandero added, quickly, motioning to Hall that it was time for everyone but the doctors to leave the room.

Hall stood up, again patted the blue-veined hand of the President. He watched Tabio, pausing to gain strength, mutely protesting with glazed eyes the obvious stage directions of the doctors who ended this visit.

"I must go now, Don Anibal," Hall said, softly. "If you wish, I will be back tomorrow or the next day."

"Matthew," Tabio said, and he began to address Hall in English, "you were in Spain. You saw. Tell them it does not matter if one man lives or dies. I have no fears for truth. I have come a long way on truth. Tell them, *viejo*, tell them what a miracle truth is in the hands of the people. You have but"—the words were coming with great difficulty—"you have but to make this truth known...."

Tabio's jaw sagged open. He fell forward against his knees. The doctors took him by the shoulders and moved him into a prone position. His eyes, still open, stared at everything and nothing, glass now.

"*Cariño mío!*" his wife sobbed, but at an unspoken order from one of the doctors Simon led his mother to a chair in the corner and kept her still. Lavandero, Gonzales and Hall left the chamber for the library.

"What happened to Anibal?" Lavandero asked Gonzales.

The doctor shook his head. "It is the end," he said. "Don Anibal will never speak again."

"You lie!"

"No, Esteban." He turned to Hall. "His last words were to you, *compañero*."

"Christ Almighty!"

"For God's sake, tell me what happened to Anibal!"

"He fell into a coma. I think it is a stroke." Gonzales sat heavily in one of the leather chairs, began to fumble in his pocket for another adrenalin vial. His fingers began to become frantic in their impotence. "I—I ..."

Hall caught his head as he started to collapse. He reached into the doctor's pocket, found the adrenalin and used it.

"It is a stupid way to live," Gonzales said. "To have your life depend always on your being a vegetable with a bottle. Thank you, *compañero*. Just let me rest here for a few minutes."

Throughout all of this, Lavandero stood over Tabio's table, staring down at the jar of pencils with a dark, ugly face. He clenched opened clenched opened clenched his fists, his fingers working to no definite rhythm, and then he looked at his fists opening and closing and for a few minutes it seemed as if he looked upon his own hands with loathing. Then, straightening up, he put his hands in the pockets of his blue jacket and turned to Hall and Gonzales. "This is no time to plan personal violence," he said. "It would be exactly what the fascists wanted."

"I am at your orders," Hall said. "I think you know that."

"I am counting on you."

"What do I do now?"

"Keep out of sight for a few hours. I think you should go to Gonzales' house. I'll get you an official car and a chauffeur."

"I'm not alone," Hall said. He told Lavandero about Jerry and the death of Androtten.

"*Madre de Dios*, take her with you! And keep her hidden." The sweat pouring down his face betrayed Lavandero's excitement; his voice was calm and steady. "I'll send an armed guard with you."

"I'll get the nurse," Gonzales said.

"No. Don't get up. Tell us where she is."

Lavandero had taken over. Later, Hall knew, the man would allow himself to fly into a wild rage, but he would do it alone, where no one could hear or

see him. And Hall knew, also, that soon Lavandero would be engaged in a battle with Gamburdo and the fascists for control of the nation.

Chapter fourteen

The black Packard roared out of the subterranean garage of the Presidencia, shot out to the Avenida de la Liberacion. Hall and Jerry, in the back seat, looked behind them at the second Packard which carried their convoy of guards. "They have enough tommy guns back there to blow up anyone who makes a pass at us," he said. "And the two boys in the front seat can throw plenty of lead."

"It's like a gangster movie," Jerry said.

"That shooting in your room this morning was no movie. I've never seen a deader Nazi than the late Wilhelm Androtten, alias X."

"What's going to happen to us now, Matt?"

"Don't worry."

"I am worried. I want to know."

The two cars pulled up at the doctor's house. Maria Luisa, Gonzales' fourteen-year-old daughter, met them at the door. "I am preparing some sandwiches," she said. "Father said you were famished."

They waited in the living room while the girl worked in the kitchen. "You're too hot in San Hermano," Hall said.

"Not yet. They don't know what happened to Androtten. I can just go on being Ansaldo's nurse until ..."

"Forget it," he snapped. "This isn't for amateurs any longer. And you're still an amateur, baby."

"Then what do you suggest I do?"

"You're going back to the States with a bodyguard on the next plane out of here. You're waiting for me in Miami. I'll give you a letter to one of the chiefs of Military Intelligence there. You'll be safe."

"How about you?"

"I'll meet you in two weeks. Three weeks at the outside."

"I won't do it, Matt. I'm staying here with you."

"But I won't be here all the time."

"Then I'll wait here for you."

"Baby, listen." He took out a package of American cigarettes, put one in her mouth, lit it. "Ladies don't smoke in San Hermano. You can smoke until you hear anyone coming. Then hand it to me. Now, sit down like a good girl, and for God's sake, listen carefully. There's a job I've got to do. It's my job alone. I've got to do it alone. I had an idea that before I was through here I'd have to do it. But Tabio's last words were spoken in English and they were to me, and baby, as soon as he stopped talking I knew what I had to do."

Hall quoted the President's words about the power of Truth. "And he was right," he said. "I remember what happened when I got out of the can in Spain. I went back to Paris to get some rest. Tabio was in Geneva, packing his things to go home. I found out he was still there and I went to see him before he left. He was going home to run for President so that this country shouldn't become a second Spain.

"I remember telling him that the thing which kept me alive in Franco's prison was my feeling that a miracle would happen—that the little guys in England and France would force the appeasers to sell guns to the Republic, or that Russia would be able to fly some heavy bombers across France for

Madrid, or that Roosevelt would open his eyes and lift the damned embargo, or anything. Any good miracle like these, even a tiny one, would have saved the day. And I went to sleep every day sure that each morning I'd wake up closer to the day this miracle would happen, and that some morning I'd wake up and find that the people somewhere outside of Spain had performed this miracle.

"I remember the way Tabio listened to me speak, and how when I was done he said that the miracle I wanted all that time was that the truth should get to the people. It was that simple. And he was dead right. It's exactly what he did in his own country, and you know how the people love him for it."

Jerry looked puzzled. "But what do you propose to do?"

"Look," he said. "It's a matter of days at most before the whole nation will be mourning Tabio. The Constitution says that within thirty days after the President dies, there must be a general election. I have an idea that the race will be between Gamburdo and someone like Lavandero. Both will claim that they are Tabio's real choice as a successor. If I can get to Havana, I can dig up the truth about Gamburdo and Ansaldo in a matter of days. I'm sure of it. If it's anywhere at all, it's in Havana. Gamburdo is taking public credit for trying to save Tabio's life by bringing Ansaldo to San Hermano. The truth can make this boomerang in his face."

"Can't I help in any way?"

Hall stopped short. "Do you know what you're asking? That scrape in the hotel this morning was nothing compared to the things you're asking for if you stay. Even if Gamburdo is licked, it's only the beginning."

"But you're sticking it out, aren't you?"

"I have to. I've been in it since Madrid. There's no escaping it for me. I'll never know any peace until the crime of Spain is liquidated. Fascism isn't

just an ideological enemy for me, baby. It's a cancer burning in my own, my very personal guts. I'd go off my conk if mine weren't two of the billion fists that are smashing and will go on smashing back at fascism until it's deader than Willie Androtten. I've never stopped to think of what my chances are of being alive at the finish. All I know is that if I stopped fighting it I'd die."

"Let me stay," Jerry pleaded. "I'd be a liar if I said that's the way I felt, too. But the war came to me this morning at the end of Androtten's gun, darling. I can't escape it any more than you can now."

They had an early dinner with Gonzales and his daughter, avoiding all serious discussion until Lavandero arrived. The Minister of Education brought grim news: Anibal Tabio had suffered a second stroke and was dying.

"Where is Ansaldo?" Hall asked.

"He is still on the ranch of Gamburdo's brother. He is waiting for an answer to his ultimatum. Don Anibal's condition is still a secret."

"But Esteban," Gonzales said, "we cannot keep it a secret. You will be accused of murdering Don Anibal if Gamburdo finds out."

"I know. I've asked Segador to come. I wanted to bring Simon Tabio, but he refuses to leave the room while his father still breathes. What do you think, *Compañero* Hall? What is the first thing we have to do? By the way, does the señorita speak Spanish?"

"No. I will tell her what she should know later."

"Is she reliable?"

"I hope to marry her—if I am alive in three weeks."

Jerry looked at Hall's face and blushed. "I'll bet you just told him about us," she said.

"My felicitations," Lavandero said, in English. He gave her his hand. "But with your permission, we must speak in Spanish."

Hall told Lavandero and Gonzales his plan about Havana. "I was going to do it in any event if Duarte didn't hear from his friends in Mexico."

"But why Havana?"

"Because Havana was the base headquarters in the Western Hemisphere for all Falangist work. The boys in the Casa de la Cultura and on the staff of *Ahora* worked with the Batista government to break it up. They arrested the key leaders, but even though they had to let them go back to Spain, they took their confidential files away from them."

"And you think that Ansaldo will turn up in these files?"

"It is something we must not overlook."

"There is someone at the door," Gonzales said. "Wait." He slipped the safety of the automatic in his pocket, and went to the door with his hand on the gun.

"Be tranquil," Gonzales announced. "It is Diego."

The Major Diego Segador who walked into the room was quite a different creature from the mournful-visaged officer in the neat uniform Hall had met at the barracks. He wore a gray civilian suit, whose jacket was at least four sizes too small for his broad frame, yellow box-toe shoes and an incongruous striped silk shirt. The discolored flat straw hat he carried in his tremendous square hands completed the picture which immediately came to

Hall's mind: a vision of Diego Segador as a tough steel-worker on a holiday in Youngstown, Ohio, during the twenties.

"You look," said Gonzales, "like a Gallego grocer on his way to High Mass."

"That's enough," Lavandero said sharply, "Don Anibal is dying."

The blood rose to Segador's head. "No!" he shouted.

"Sit down, Diego."

Gonzales opened a cabinet and took out a bottle of brandy. He shouted to the kitchen for his daughter to bring glasses.

"Major," Hall said, "this is Miss Olmstead."

"Hello," Segador said, in English. "You have close shave, no?"

All the men had brandy. Jerry merely looked at the bottle with great longing.

"Well then, Diego," Lavandero said, "minutes count now. Hall has a plan. It is a good one." He described it for the Major. "If he comes back with pictures of Ansaldo in the uniform of the Falange, we will have to flood the country with them. They will not look nice next to the pictures of Ansaldo embracing Gamburdo, no?"

"They will look very nice—for us. But how is Hall going to get to Havana?"

"By plane. Why?"

"Why? Because you are a marked man, Hall."

"Get me to the border, then. I'll get to Havana from across the border."

"Not on your passport," Segador said. "It is too risky. Tomas, you have a passport, no? Never mind. All right, then, Hall. You go on a passport made out to Vicente, but with your picture on it. I'll drive you north by car. You board a plane in San Martin Province—there's one that meets the Clipper for Miami. The mining men use it. You travel to Havana as one of our nationals, one Emilio Vicente. Then the officials of your own government in San Juan won't ..." He stopped suddenly, filled his glass with brandy, and drank it in one short gulp.

"Out with it, Major," Hall said. "What are you hiding?"

"Hiding?"

"About me and my government?"

"Nothing. It's just that you are too well known as Matthew Hall. You are known by face in San Juan. Perhaps, when you land there to refuel, someone will recognize you. And then there will be trouble about your Vicente passport. Perhaps—one cannot be too careful."

Hall knew that the Major was concealing something from him, something that had to do with himself. He thought of his low standing at the American Embassy, and of some of the fascists in high places he had offended in San Juan. "Yes," he said, "I think you are right." This, he decided, was not the time to start new trouble.

"No," Lavandero said, "it is no good. We shall need another passport for *Compañero* Hall."

"How can we get it?" Segador asked. "There is no time."

"There is time," Lavandero said, evenly. "Duarte is preparing a passport and papers for Hall. Diplomatic. He will travel as Victor Ortiz Tinoco, official courier of the Mexican Government."

"When did he start on the papers?" Hall asked.

"A few hours ago. He thought you might want to make the trip."

"Why didn't you tell me before this?"

Lavandero's face softened. "My dear friend," he said, "what you are undertaking is no minor task. The complications are enormous. If you are caught, you face much legal trouble at the very least; death by violence, if the fascists catch you first. You are under no obligations to this Republic. I had to hear it from your lips first."

"When can I start?"

"In two hours. You will have to give me your passport, so that I may have the picture copied for the Ortiz Tinoco papers. Segador's idea is the right one. He will drive you to the San Martin airport tonight. The Mexican Embassy is ordering the tickets. I will leave you with Gonzales and Segador to work out the rest of the details."

"Good. Here is my passport."

"The Republic will always be grateful to you, *Compañero* Hall." Lavandero stood up and started for the door. Hall accompanied him.

"Well," Hall said, "I'll try to get back within the week—if I'm lucky." He held out his hand to the Minister.

"Thank you, *compañero*." Lavandero raised his arms to Hall's shoulders and embraced him. "You were worthy of his trust."

"And you of his love," Hall answered. He was sorry for Lavandero, sorry for him as a friend, as a man, as a leader so intent on answering his responsibilities to his moment in history that he had to allow his own

personal rages to simmer unattended within him until there again came a time when a man could walk off alone and be his own master.

"I will see you in a week, *compañero*."

Hall walked back to the living room. Segador was trying to convey to Jerry his impressions of Atlantic City in 1919. "Womans *bonitas*," he was shouting, "whisky bad. Much bad. I have young years, much money. Well, well. So."

"We'll listen to your memoirs when I get back," Hall said.

"When we get back," Segador said.

"You're coming with me?"

"I'm meeting you on your way back. We'll meet in Caracas. Listen to me, *compañero*. The chief of our Air Force is loyal. He will give me one of our American bombers. From the San Martin airport, a bomber can make Caracas in fifteen hours. Give me ten hours' notice, and I will meet you in time. I already have a loyal flying crew standing by for my orders."

"Where can we meet in Caracas?"

"At the airport. I can meet your plane."

"Won't you be followed?"

"Of course. By three or four of my picked men. Don't worry about that."

Gonzales interrupted to say that there would be time for them to have dinner at the house before starting on the drive north.

"Oh, while we're at it," Hall said, "I am going to ask you to be good enough to keep my *novia* here until I return. That is, if Segador thinks it is safe."

"It is safe," the Major grunted. "We will make it safe."

"Then it is the privilege of my daughter and myself to make this house the señorita's for a century." Gonzales called his daughter in from the kitchen. "It will be very good for her, *amigos*. Maria Luisa is studying English in high school. It will help her greatly."

"Let her teach Jerry Spanish in a week," Hall said.

The girl seemed pleased when her father told her about Jerry. "Oh, nice," she said, trying out her English immediately. "You are very welcome, Aunt. The pleasure it is all of mine."

"You are very kind," Jerry said.

"Please. May I show you the room? There are five rooms upstairs in my father's house. Your room faces the ..." She paused, flustered, turned to Hall. "*Cómo se dice, por favor, frente con vista al mar?*"

"Tell her that her room *faces the ocean front*, Maria Luisa. And teach her two words of Spanish for every word you learn from her."

"Let's go," Jerry said to the girl. "Vamoose *arriba, sí*?"

"Under no circumstances," Segador said when the girls were gone, "must you attempt to come back by regular routes. If anything happens to me, wait at the border. Get to Santiago by plane, and wait in the big hotel for word from us."

"How bad is it for me?"

"Who knows? The fascists are mother-raping bastards, but they are no donkeys. Today they must be looking for you in San Hermano. In a few hours, they will begin to worry. Tomorrow they will become upset because you are gone, and by tomorrow night they will turn the whole Cross and

Sword gang loose to look for you. But by tomorrow night, if all goes well, and if that madman of a Duarte doesn't try to drive the car himself but brings his driver along, you will be in Havana.

"Of course," Segador said, "we will do everything we can to end the hunt. But we can only do the usual things. Perhaps we will identify the body of some poor Hermanito who gets killed by a car as Matthew Hall. Give me some papers, by the way; we'll need them if we can get the right body."

"Lavandero has my American passport. And here's my wallet. That's good enough." Hall took the three photos out of the wallet. "The pictures are for her—if I don't come back."

"And the money?"

Hall flipped his fingers through the eight hundred-odd dollars worth of travelers' checks. "I'd better sign these, just in case," he said. "I want you to split it between Pepe Delgado and Emilio Vicente."

"I understand," Segador said. "Duarte is bringing some money for you to travel on."

"I'll repay him when I return. Is there anything else I should know? I have to write a letter. Have you any paper, doctor?"

"In a moment."

"Just a few things," Segador said. "A simple code for sending messages to us." He explained the code system in a few minutes. "And one other thing. I have the pictures we took of that Nazi Vicente shot; pictures of his face and his fingerprints. We will seal them in the pouch you are carrying. Perhaps you can identify it in Havana somehow."

"I will try. Ah, thanks for the paper. This will take me only a few minutes." Hall propped the writing pad on his lap and wrote a short note to his

attorney in New York.

"Well, this is it," he wrote, "and I'll be more surprised than you are if you ever receive this letter. I'm about to leave this country on what might turn out to be a one-way trip to the grave. If I don't come back, this letter is to be sent to you. It's about my will. I still want the dough to go to the Spanish refugees and the veterans of the International Brigades, but I want to lop off about a quarter of the total in the bank and due me from Bird and leave it for Miss Geraldine Olmstead. She is an American citizen and, if you hadn't received this note, would by now be Mrs. H. When you meet her, introduce her to my friends and take her around to the Committee; she wants to help the Spanish Republicans. If I really thought this was my last trip, I guess I'd close this letter with some appropriate and high-sounding last lines—you know, the kind of crap a guy would write as the lead for his own obit. But we'll skip the farewell address. This letter is being witnessed by two good friends, one a doctor and the other a major in this country. I guess that makes it legal."

Hall signed the letter, told Gonzales and Segador what he wanted done with it, and handed them the pen. "How much time do we have?" he asked.

"You will have to leave in less than two hours," Segador said. "Duarte will be here long before then."

"Good." Hall looked at his watch. "I would like to see the girl alone in her room for a while. There is much that I must tell her before I go."

"I understand," Segador said.

"Are you making the trip to San Martin with me?"

"No. I will only ride the first twenty miles with you. I have a car waiting for me at Marao."

Hall waited for Gonzales to call his daughter, and then he went up to Jerry's room.

Chapter fifteen

Hall had time to buy a paper at the Havana airport before the Panair bus started out for the city. In the half-light of evening, he could read only the headlines, and the front page carried nothing about Tabio's condition. It meant only one thing, that Don Anibal was still alive. His death would have rated a banner headline in every paper published south of the United States borders.

He folded the paper under his sealed attaché case, sat wearily back in his seat as the half-empty bus rolled through the flat table lands between the airport and Havana. It was a run of fifteen miles from Rancho Boyeros to the Prado, a stretch long enough to give Hall another opportunity to review in his mind the nature of the tasks that lay ahead of him.

Physically, there were few details which could trap him. Duarte had been very thorough, even to the point of bringing Mexican labels for Jerry to sew into every item of apparel on Hall's body and in his Mexican leather grip. The credentials in his worn Mexican wallet had carried him through the control stations of four governments, including the station in San Juan (although the night in Puerto Rico had been a jittery twelve hours of sulking in his room like a caged animal). He wore a hat and a pair of soft ankle boots which belonged to Duarte, and a pair of broad-framed tortoise-shell reading glasses he had borrowed from Dr. Gonzales. The attaché case, protected by the Mexican seal, contained the pictures of Androtten, a letter from Duarte to a man named Figueroa in the Mexican Embassy, and the automatic Segador had given him the day after he was drugged.

It was too late to report to the Mexican Embassy and deliver the letter to Figueroa. But the Casa de la Cultura would be open (there were lectures

and meetings of some sort going on every night at the Spanish Republican society), the boys on the staff of *Ahora* would be at their desks at the paper, and Colonel Lobo could always be reached within a few hours. The idea was to contact all three tonight; if the documentary bomb which would blow up Ansaldo was anywhere in Havana, it would be either at the Casa, the paper, or in the files of the Secret Police.

His heart quickened as the bus reached the narrow streets of Havana, honked its way to the Maceo, and then turned lazily down the Prado. He loved this city as he loved only two others, New York and Madrid. In the course of nearly four decades, Hall had spent a mere four months in Havana, but these were months in which he rarely got more than four hours' sleep a night. He had worked hard in this city, but for a hundred-odd nights he had also known the fantastic pleasures of merely walking the streets of the Cuban capital, talking to friends, stopping off to rest and have a tropical beer or a tall glass of mamey pulp, getting drunk only on the green softness of the Havana moon and the cool pleasures of the Gulf breeze. Here he had found old friends from Spain, and made new and life-long friendships with a host of Cubans. He knew, when he last left Havana, that the city had become one of his spiritual homes, that always he would think of it as a place to which he could return when he wanted the peace which comes to a man from being where he belongs.

As they approached the Panair office, Hall became apprehensive. He was afraid that he might be recognized by one of the clerks. He dug into his wallet for an American two-dollar bill and handed it to the driver. "Take me directly to the Jefferson Hotel, *chico*," he said. "It is only two streets out of your way."

"I won't get shot if I do, *amigo*."

He chose the Jefferson because it was a small, ancient and very unfashionable hotel, without a bar, and completely overlooked by the American colony. It was also very inexpensive, just the kind of a place a new courier, anxious to make a good record, would choose. It was on the Prado, it was clean, and the bills were modest enough to reflect to the credit of the government traveler who submitted them. Not the least of its charms for Hall was that the Jefferson was the one place where he stood not the slightest chance of being known by either the guests or the employees.

He signed the register with a modest flourish, insisted upon and obtained a reduced rate due to his standing as a courier, and then, spotting the large safe in the office behind the counter, he asked for the manager. "I am," he said, flourishing his identity papers, "a courier of the Mexican Government. Since I have arrived too late to present myself to my Embassy tonight, could I ask for the privilege of depositing my case in your safe for the night?"

The manager said he would be honored to oblige. He had, he said, traveled widely in Mexico, and admired the Mexican people, the Mexican Government, and most of all Señor Ortiz Tinoco's Department of Foreign Relations, and did the visitor expect to make frequent stops in Havana? The visitor assured the manager that he did.

The case was handed to the night clerk, who opened the safe, deposited it, and closed the heavy iron door. "It will be as safe," the manager said, "as the gold in the teeth of a Gallego."

"That," said Hall, "is security enough for me."

He got into the rickety elevator and went to his room. It was a large room overlooking the Prado. He opened the shutters, looked out at the star-drenched skies. He was home again. Outside, juke boxes in three different open cafés on one street were playing three records with maximum volume.

A baby in the next room was lying alone and cooing at the ceiling. Near by, a light roused a rooster on some rooftop to let out a loud call.

Hall heard the sounds of the city as they blended into the tone pattern peculiarly Havana's own. He took a quick shower, changed into some fresh clothes, and went downstairs to the Prado. He stopped first at a cigar stand a few doors from the hotel, bought a handful of choice cigars, and lit a long and very dark Partagas, being careful to remember that only gringos removed the cigar band before lighting up.

He walked casually down the Prado, toward the Malecon, pausing in the course of the four blocks between the Casa de la Cultura and the Jefferson to study the stills in the lobby of a movie house showing an American film, to sip a leisurely pot of coffee, and to buy a box of wax matches and a lottery ticket from a street vendor. From the street, he could see that the windows of the Casa were well lighted. He walked another block, crossed the street, and then, very casually, he studied the signs on the street entrance to the organization's headquarters. *Tonight: Lecture on History of Music by Professor A. Vasquez. Dance and ball for young people.* And why shouldn't a bachelor courier on the loose in Havana attend a dance for the young *refugiados*? He went through the motions of a visiting blade debating with himself the propriety of attending such a ball.

Squaring his shoulders, the Mexican courier put the cigar in his mouth and started to climb the stairs to the headquarters of the Casa. He climbed slowly, afraid of receiving too enthusiastic a greeting when he reached the first-floor landing.

There was a light in the small meeting room at the end of the corridor. Hall stood near the door for a few minutes, listening for a familiar voice through the opened transom. Then, carefully, he knocked, and turned the handle of the door. It was open.

He stepped into a meeting of a small committee. Eight men were sitting around a long table. They were talking about the problems of getting help to the Spaniards in the French concentration camps in North Africa. All discussion stopped the moment the confreres saw Hall.

"I am looking," he said, "for Santiago Iglesias."

A tawny-haired Spaniard at the table looked up. "*Viejo!*" he shouted, springing from his chair and rushing over to confront Hall.

The right hand which rose to take the cigar from Hall's mouth also lingered long enough to hold an admonishing finger to his lips. "Hello, Rafael," he said. "I didn't know you were in Cuba."

Rafael was grinning like a Cheshire cat. "Neither did Franco," he laughed. "Last week I found out for the first time that the fascists had jailed you and that you got out after the war. I thought you were dead, M..."

The look in Hall's eyes stopped him from pronouncing the rest of the American's name.

"Let's go outside," Hall said, softly. "I do not have much time."

They stepped into the corridor. "Where can we talk?" Hall asked. "Is anyone using Santiago's office?"

"No. We can sit there."

They found the office unoccupied. "Don't turn the light on," Hall said. "The window faces the street."

Rafael locked the door, pulled two seats close to the big desk in the corner. "We can sit here and talk quietly," he said.

"It's wonderful to see you, Rafael. I'd heard you were captured in a hospital during the Ebro retreat."

"*Mierda!* That's what the fascists boasted. No. I came out of the retreat in good order. I started with thirty men, but, instead of taking to the roads like the Lincolns, I started to cross the mountains. I went up with thirty men, and I came down on the other side with a battalion. Most of them got through alive after that."

"Good boy! Where have you been since then?"

"In hell!" Rafael spat, angrily. "Rotting in a French concentration camp, mostly. I organized an escape. We killed six guards, and more than twenty prisoners got away. I got to Casablanca through the underground, and they put me on a Chilean ship. Two weeks ago we reached Havana. I'm to eat and rest for a month. Then I go back to Spain for more fighting. With the guerrillas. When did you get here?"

"An hour ago. Listen, I want to talk to you. But it is important that we find Santiago. Is he in town?"

"Yes. He is supposed to be at our meeting. He'll be here."

"Can you go back and leave word for him to join you in here the minute he comes? It's very important."

Rafael jumped from his chair, struck an absurd caricature of military posture, and made a limp French salute, his hand resting languidly against his ear. "*Mais oui, mon général*," he said. "*Mais oui, oui, oui.*" He marched stiffly out of the room, posing at the door to make an obscene gesture meant for the men of Vichy.

He glided noiselessly back to the dark office in a few minutes, waved Hall's proffered cigar away. "I can't smoke any more. We had nothing to smoke

the last year in Spain, and Monsieur Daladier and Company never sent us any tobacco. Now I just can't stand it. I walk around Havana and everyone offers me cigars, but I've lost my taste for it."

"It will come back, Rafael."

"Why are you in Havana, Mateo?"

"It is a long story, *chico*. I'd rather tell you in front of Santiago. It's about Anibal Tabio. I left San Hermano two nights ago. Things are serious, there. Falange."

"Is Tabio really so ill?"

"He is dying, *chico*. He may be dead by now. I think he was killed by the Falange. I came here for the proof. Santiago knows. We've exchanged letters."

"*Hola!*" Santiago Iglesias was at the door. "Then you got my letters?" He was ten years older than Rafael, tall and powerfully built. He crossed the room in long, athlete's strides, his head thrown back as if to announce to the world that the white hairs which outnumbered the black of his head were merely an accident of the war.

"I knew you would understand," Hall said.

"What happens?"

"Don Anibal is dying. I think Ansaldo did it."

"He is a fascist, Mateo. You were absolutely right."

"How do you know? I need the proof immediately."

"There is a man in town who was trapped behind Franco's lines for two years. He knew Ansaldo well."

"That is good—for you and me. But it is not enough. There is too much at stake."

"I guessed as much, Mateo. General Mograd sent a message from Mexico City a few days ago. He wanted the information also. I took this man in Havana and we went to a lawyer and he made a long affidavit about Ansaldo. Mograd has the affidavit by this time."

"Who is this man? Is he well known?"

"No, Mateo. He was a minor official of the Ministry of Commerce. I have a copy of his affidavit, and you can meet him tomorrow if you wish. He is staying with relatives in Marianao."

"Let us try to see him tomorrow. But I need much more than his affidavit. I need more than anything else a picture of Ansaldo in Falange uniform, a picture that shows him with officers of Germany and Italy. I was in Burgos when the picture was taken—and I have a feeling that the picture is right here in Havana."

"Here? In Havana?"

"Listen, *compañeros*. I saw the *Arriba* man take that picture. I was standing a hundred feet away. It was in the spring or summer of 1938," Hall said. "I know you have the complete file of *Arriba* here."

"No, Mateo. We do not."

The blood left Hall's head. "You don't?" he said. "But when I was here we ..."

"It is the complete file of *Arriba* of Madrid since April of 1939, Mateo. Since Franco entered Madrid, *amigo*."

"And before that?"

"There are some, but not a complete file. They have many fascist papers at *Ahora*, and at the University there is Dr. Nazario with his personal collection of fascist publications. It is very large, and it goes back to 1935 in some cases, but it has many empty places."

"And the Secret Police? What has Colonel Lobo got?"

"Dossiers and documents. But papers—who knows?"

"I'll be back in Madrid in a month," Rafael said. "I can go back sooner if it will help the cause, Mateo. There is surely a complete file there."

"No, thank you, Rafael, but I need the picture in a few hours." He told them why the pictures were needed, and how they would be used if he could find them.

"Don't worry," Santiago said. "There are three collections to examine, and in the meanwhile we might get some further clues from de Sola. He is a very intelligent fellow. I'll put him to work on Dr. Nazario's collection in the morning. Rafael, tonight you go to *Ahora*. Go through their Spanish collection, and then examine their files of *Arriba* of Havana. The local *Arriba* used more pictures than an American magazine, and most of them came from Franco Spain. You'd better go right now."

"I'll be there in ten minutes. Shall I tell them what it's about, Mateo?"

"No, I'll tell them myself. I'm here on false papers. Just warn them that if they see me on the street I'm not to be recognized. But I'll see them before I leave."

"I'm going to call Lobo," Hall said. "At the very least his dossiers are more official than de Sola's affidavit."

Santiago shoved the phone toward Hall. "I was going to suggest it myself. Do you remember the number?"

"Of course."

There was no answer at Lobo's house. Hall called the headquarters of the National Police. "I want to reach Colonel Lobo," he said to the man who answered his call.

"We no longer have a Colonel Lobo."

"What?"

"We have a General Lobo, señor."

"Where is he?"

"Who is this speaking?"

"Who am I?" Hall hesitated. "If he's there, just tell him it's Johnny Verde Luna. He'll know who it is." Lobo called all Americans Johnny; Verde Luna was a horse he and Hall had played for three straight weeks at the Hipodromo until it romped home in front at the longest odds in ten years.

"I will, Mr. Johnny Green Moon," the other man said, in English. "When I see him tomorrow."

"I don't understand you, señor. I ..."

"He is not here, señor."

"I know. Don't tell me where he is. But do you know?"

"That depends."

"Listen to me, my friend," Hall said, his voice rising angrily, "I have no time to play games. If you know where he is, find him and give him my message. I'll call you every fifteen minutes until you get word from him."

"Yes, señor. I will do what I can. Where can I call you?"

"Never mind. I will call you." Hall hung up. "A clown!" he muttered.

"I forgot to tell you that Lobo is now a general."

"When did it happen?"

"Last week. It came as a reward for breaking up the Pinar del Rio Nazi-Falange ring. You know, the one that was in radio contact with the German submarines."

"I remember it well." Hall had worked with Lobo in rooting the spy ring out. "I wonder where the hell he is?"

"Who knows? But listen, Mateo, I know a man who knows all of Lobo's hangouts. Suppose I send him out to look?"

"Excellent. Just tell him to give Lobo this message—that he is the only man who can save the life of Don Anibal Tabio. Eh?"

"We'll try it. Wait here for me. I'll be right back."

Hall started to tell Santiago the whole story of his experiences in San Hermano when the Spaniard returned to the office. As soon as he mentioned the fact that Ansaldo's assistant Marina was a morphine addict, Santiago interrupted him.

"*Hijo de la gran puta!* I think I know him. Wait, I'll describe him. I know him, all right, Mateo. Wait, I'll close the shutters. Then we can turn on the light. I think I have his picture in this room."

"Who is he, Santiago?"

"Just a second. That's better." He turned on the small desk light. "Let's go to the files."

The Spaniard took a set of keys from his pocket, opened a heavy door behind the desk and snapped on the light in a small store room. He stepped in front of a row of steel filing cabinets, opened one with another key. "He used another name in Spain—and in Paris. I know it's the same man. Called himself Marcelino Gassau in 1937. Wait. Here it is."

"It's the *maricón*!" Hall cried when he saw the picture Santiago drew from the file.

"I knew it."

Hall glanced at his watch. "Just a second. I'm going to call Lobo back. It's time. Let's bring the whole file on the bastard out to the desk."

The man at police headquarters had no news of Lobo. "I'll call you back," Hall said. "Keep trying him."

"So Gassau is your Marina," Santiago laughed. "We knew him well, the *cabrón*. He was working in Portugal and Berlin as a liaison between Sanjurjo and von Faupel in 1935 and 1936. Then, when the war started, he went to Paris, the coward, spying on the German anti-fascists who were on their way to fight with the Thaelmanns in Spain. He posed as a contact man for the U.G.T., and then he'd lead the Germans straight to the French police and notify the German Embassy. Then the Nazis would start to complain that they were criminals who escaped from German prisons and claim them back. Not one of the poor devils ever got to Spain, but some of them were ultimately turned over to the German Government and killed. It's all in this file."

"What else can I find here?"

"Not too much. He made a trip to Barcelona in 1937. The authorities arrested him, but his friends got the British consulate to make a special plea

for his release, and the damned fools gave in and let him go. After that he went to Argentina, but he returned to Madrid in May of 1939."

The papers contained a detailed record of the fascist agent's crimes against the Republic, and ended with a clipping from *Informaciones* of Madrid which revealed that Gassau-Marina was one of ten men to be decorated by the Falangist Government for distinguished service during the three years of the war. A footnote to this list said that Gassau-Marina was one of the three men decorated that day who had previously been awarded the Order of the German Eagle, Second Class, by German Ambassador to Spain, General Wilhelm von Faupel.

"This will help," Hall said. "It's a good start."

"There's my phone. Just a minute." It was Rafael. He was calling from the offices of *Ahora*, and he suggested that Santiago join him there.

"Let's go," Hall said. "Do we use separate cabs?"

"Don't be a child, Mateo. You're in Havana."

"I'd better check with police headquarters on Lobo before we leave."

They found Rafael in a tile-lined office on the second floor of the newspaper building. He was sitting at a large table, three large piles of fascist publications before him, and an opened copy of the Havana *Arriba* in his hands. "No luck yet," he said. "But Eduardo Sanchez had an idea where the picture can be found."

"Where is he?"

"He's in there," Rafael pointed to a door. "He's digging out some more magazines."

Sanchez walked in with an armload of bright-colored Havana *Arribas*. "It's good to see you again, Mateo," he said. "What passes?"

"Trouble. How are you making out?"

"Who knows? Are you going to stay long?"

"I'm leaving tomorrow if I can get what I need."

"You say the picture would be in *Arriba* for 1938?"

"If at all, Eduardo."

"That's serious. There is only one place in town where I know definitely there is a complete file of *Arriba*. It might be a little hard to get into."

"Where is it?"

"The third floor of the Spanish Embassy."

"That's bad," Hall said.

"Bad, yes," Santiago said. He put his arms over the shoulders of Rafael and Eduardo. "But not hopeless, eh, *compañeros*?"

Eduardo smiled, grimly. Rafael grinned, a sudden glint in his blue eyes.

"What do you think, Rafael?"

"I think we should shoot our way in, *mi coronel*."

"And you, Eduardo?"

"I don't know. If we shoot our way in, we have to shoot our way out again too. Maybe we'll kill a few fascists, but will we be able to get at their files?"

"It would do us good," Rafael said, "to kill ourselves a few fascists. I think we are getting out of practice."

"Sit down," Santiago said. "This takes some planning. Mateo, you had better tell Eduardo what is at stake."

"In a minute. I want some water. And I'd better phone Lobo's headquarters again."

"Use this phone," Eduardo said. "I'll bring you water." He took three sheets of gray copy paper from his desk and fashioned a water cup. "We can't get paper cups since Pearl Harbor."

"Listen to me," Santiago said. "There is a way we can kill two birds with one stone. Eduardo, if Hall gets the picture, it kills Gamburdo and the Falange in San Hermano. That's one bird."

"And the other?"

"The other, *compañeros*, is Fernando Rivas."

"Rivas?" Eduardo's dark, good-looking face grew puzzled. "Is he in this too?"

"Wait. I should bring *Compañero* Hall up to date. You don't know Rivas, Mateo. He is a queer bird. He comes from a good Republican family in Madrid. A very good family. Republican since before the First Republic. This Rivas, this Fernando, he was good. Under Alfonso, he got a job in the Foreign Office. They sent him to Havana as an attaché in the legation. Even then he was a good Republican. But something happened to the man when the war started. He didn't fight for the fascists, but ..."

"Tell him about his wife," Rafael said.

"That's what I think did it. He had a British wife, and she had high-life aspirations."

"I think I understand," Hall said.

"I don't have to go into the details. There is no time for that, anyway. The point is that he had to go to Spain last year, and he came back filled with loathing for everything he saw. This I know for a fact. First, he started to sit home alone every night and get drunk, and then he began to write a memoir about what he saw. He didn't think anyone would ever see it. He still doesn't know that anyone but himself has ever seen it. I got it from his servant one morning a few weeks ago. She is one of ours. We photographed it and she put it back before he got home that night."

Eduardo passed a box of inexpensive cigars around. "The week before that," he said, "I ran into Rivas at a café in Matanzas. He was sobering up after a drinking bout. I tried to avoid him but he followed me out of the place. He was crying. He called himself a son of a whore mother and a traitor to his honor and his people and carried on like a fool. Then he started to tell me about his wife's lover—we've known all about that for months, but Rivas had just found out—and I became filled with disgust for the creature. I shook him off and left him standing in the street crying like a whipped dog. I hate weaklings."

"I get it," Hall said. "But when you saw his diary, you started to change your mind, eh?"

"I still don't trust him. I introduced him to Santiago because Santiago wanted to meet him."

"I wouldn't trust him with Franco's daughter," Rafael said.

Santiago Iglesias sighed heavily. "No one asks you to sleep with him, Rafael," he said. "It isn't that. But you remember what happened in the early days of the war. We had to take any officer who swore loyalty to the Republic. We had no choice in the matter, did we, *chico*?"

"But we also put in commissars to keep an eye on them."

"It's true, *chico*. But some of them proved to be really loyal, eh?"

"A handful."

"All right, even a handful. But the point is that they were useful. Here is the situation as of tonight: if the pictures which will kill the Falange in San Hermano are anywhere within our reach at all, they are in the Spanish Embassy. We have no contact we can trust inside the Embassy. The nearest thing to such a contact is Rivas. He is a weakling and he was a traitor. We know that. What we don't know is whether his repentance is sincere. The only way to really find out is to test the man. This is the time to test him. I've spoken with him three times in the past week. He begs for a chance to prove that he has the right to serve the Republic again."

"He can serve the Republic best," Rafael insisted, "by blowing his brains out."

"Rafael!"

"I'm sorry, Colonel Iglesias. I hate traitors."

"I don't love them, *chico*. But it is not for us to put our personal likes and dislikes before our greater duties, Major. And please remember," he added, smiling, "you still are a major in the People's Army. Neither your commission nor your Army has expired yet."

"What do you want me to do?" Rafael asked, softly. "I will respect your commands as my superior—and my friend."

Santiago toyed with a thick copy pencil. "I am going to put it to a vote right here. Who is for getting Fernando Rivas to let us into the Spanish Embassy and removing what we need from the files? Understand, we won't tell him what we want in the files—that would be trusting him too much before he

proves himself. Who is for raiding the Embassy with the help of Rivas? On this, Mateo, you will have to vote also."

Hall and Eduardo Sanchez raised their hands.

"Against?"

The three men looked at Rafael. He folded his hands in his lap, ostentatiously studied the ceiling.

"Are you against the idea, Rafael?"

"I think it is crazy, Santiago. I am not afraid. I just think it is crazy. Can't we get in without the traitor?"

"I don't know how," Santiago said. "I guess we'll have to try it without you, Rafael."

"Over my dead body, my friend. I'm going with you. I've been wrong before, but I've never avoided a battle. I'm not ducking this one, Santiago."

Eduardo winked at Hall. "Listen to the strategist," he laughed, but there was pride and real affection in his words. "Rafael," he said, "if you didn't shoot so straight I'd say that you talk too damned much."

"Go to hell," Rafael said. "You're wasting good time. Let's finish examining these fascist papers. Maybe we'll find the filthy picture tonight in these piles, and then we won't have to risk three, no four," he looked at Hall, "four good Republican lives on the guts of a traitor. Come on, Eduardo, get to work."

Hall motioned Santiago to the door. "Let's go around the corner," he whispered, "and bring back a few bottles of Cristal."

They walked slowly to the *cantinería* on the corner, had some beer, and bought a dozen bottles to take back with them. Santiago said that he hoped it would not be necessary to raid the Embassy without previously testing Rivas on less hazardous tasks.

"Personally," he said, "I think Rivas is honest about wanting to come back. I think he can be trusted if we have to do it with him. But it might mean shooting, and you cannot afford to get shot. Perhaps you had better not join us."

"No. Don't try to cut me out, *viejo*, or I'll do it alone with Rafael."

"All right. But I hope we find it before we have to raid the fascists."

They went upstairs. "Call Fabri at your office," Eduardo told Santiago. "He says he has some good news for you."

"He must have found Lobo." Santiago was right. His man had reached the General. "He says for you to meet him at headquarters in an hour. Fabri found him at a party in Vedado. If I know Jaime Lobo, that means he will actually be back in two hours. You've got plenty of time."

Eduardo took a bottle opener from his desk. "You'll get me in trouble," he said. "We're not allowed to drink in the office."

"Tell Escalante it was my fault," Hall laughed.

"You'd better sign a sworn statement."

"Tomorrow. Listen, Eduardo, there is something you must do for me. Santiago has a file on a man named Marcelino Gassau. I want the whole thing copied on microfilm, four negatives of everything in the file. Can you have it done in your dark room tomorrow morning?"

"Consider it done, Mateo."

Rafael drank his beer and cursed the magazines for not having the pictures of Ansaldo that Hall wanted. "Let's get back to work," he said, impatiently. "Let's find the damned pictures if they're here."

Hall and Santiago sat down at the desk and started to go through individual issues of various fascist publications for the year 1938. While they worked, Hall asked Santiago if he knew the Figueroa whom he had to see in the Mexican Embassy.

"He is a friend," the Spaniard said. "He is completely reliable. He will do anything you ask within reason—and nearly anything that is without reason at all."

None of the men found the photo Hall was seeking by the time he was ready to leave for General Lobo's headquarters. "I'll get you a taxi," Eduardo said. "You can take a look at the AP ticker in the wire room in the meanwhile. There might be some news on Tabio's condition."

The wires reported that Tabio still breathed.

It was nearly midnight when Hall crossed the threshold of the brooding stone building that was Secret Police Headquarters. Like all police headquarters the world over, this one also smelled faintly of carbolic and damp stone, a stench Hall had grown to detest in San Sebastian. He walked briskly down the dark corridor which led to Lobo's office.

A young lieutenant was sitting at the desk in the anteroom. "Mr. Johnny Green Moon?" he asked, grinning.

"Hello," Hall laughed. "You still here?"

"Just a second." The lieutenant pressed a button on his desk. There was a click in the electric door stop of the massive oak and iron door behind the desk. "Go right in, Mr. Green Moon."

Hall pushed the door open, stepped into the Spartan simplicity of Lobo's private office, and quickly shut out the smell of carbolic by slamming the door behind him. Lobo, who had equally good reasons for hating that odor, had installed an American air-cleaning system in his own office.

The young general—he was about three years younger than Hall—was sitting at his tremendous carved desk and studying some papers. "Johnny!" he shouted. "*Qué tal?*" He was wearing a very formal white dress uniform heavy with medals and gold braid.

"Hello, Jaime," Hall said. "You look like an American Christmas tree."

"Johnny, you dog! You took me away from a most beautiful reception."

"Beautiful?"

"A dream. Unbelievable! Four and twenty blonde Vassar girls dancing around Lobo and wondering out loud if the handsome spik speaks English. Sensational!"

Hall had to laugh with the general. He could easily picture the effect of Jaime Lobo's towering dark attractiveness—more than once in the United States Hollywood talent scouts had begged him to sign contracts—in the eyes of the American women one could find at a lavish reception in Havana. "An American sugar king's party?"

"No. The British business colony. It was stupendous." Lobo had lived in the United States for five years, got a great kick out of scattering the superlatives of Hollywood in his speech when he spoke English.

"O.K.," Hall said, dryly. "It was super-colossal." He sat down in the large armchair at the side of the desk, helped himself to one of Lobo's cigars.

"So you don't want to play," Lobo said, sobering and taking his own seat.

"Some other time, Jaime."

"Sounds bad, keed. But tell me, Johnny, is it true that Don Anibal is dying?"

"He may be dead by now."

"Ansaldo killed him?"

Hall started. "What do you know about Ansaldo?"

"I know he's a fascist pig. Why?"

"Why? For the love of God, Jaime, if you can give me the proof, we can ..." He told Lobo about the plans of Lavandero and the anti-fascists in San Hermano.

"I understand," Lobo said. "I've already sent for the dossier on Ansaldo. It should be here in a few minutes. But while we're waiting, there are a few things I'd like to show you." He opened the drawer in his desk and took out an automatic wrapped in a brown-silk handkerchief. "Take a look at this gun," he said, "but don't touch. I want to save the fingerprints."

"What about it?" Hall asked.

"Oh, nothing. I thought you might know something about it. The hell with it. But tell me, Mateo, when did you get to town?"

"This evening."

"Panair?"

"Sure, why?"

"Then you're staying at the Jefferson, registered as Victor Ortiz Tinoco, eh?"

"My God," Hall laughed. "That's my gun!"

"That was your gun, *chico*. It is now Cuban Government Exhibit A in the case against your brains. So you had it all figured out, my boy. You'd come to Havana with fake papers, put up at an out-of-the-way hotel, check your gun with the hotel management, shoot the Spanish Ambassador, and then plant the gun in my back pocket and blow town on your diplomatic Mexican passport. But you reckoned without two suspicious and smart young second lieutenants from Oriente Province."

"What was my fatal mistake, chief?"

"Your accent and the cardinal stupidity of giving your attaché case to the desk clerk. He's a communist from Oriente. The weight made him suspicious, and he called his friends in my office. Only he guessed from your accent that you were a Spaniard, and that the gun was for the purpose of shooting up the Mexican Embassy."

"You know what Jefferson said about eternal vigilance being the price of liberty, Jaime."

"Sure. Jefferson and the natural shrewdness of a peasant from Oriente Province. Of course the minute I saw the report describing Ortiz Tinoco as a Spaniard with scars on the face, a broken nose, and big feet which took him directly to the Casa de la Cultura, I knew it was Matthew Hall in a beard."

"Yeah. Of course my phone calls every fifteen minutes didn't give you any idea."

"They helped, my boy. I'll admit that." He took the envelope bearing Androtten's pictures and fingerprints from his desk. "Who is this individual? He looks as if he is very seriously dead."

"I brought that envelope here for you, Jaime. He was shot three days ago in San Hermano, but I'm afraid I broke his nose before he died. That other picture of him with his family and the letter from the Dutch Government-in-Exile might be more interesting."

"Wilhelm Androtten? Sounds like a brand of gin. Why did you kill him?"

"He's a Nazi, Jaime. He was trying to kill me."

General Lobo took some notes as he listened to Hall's account of Androtten's role in the Ansaldo mission. "I guess the first thing to do is to find out if the letter from Queen Wilhelmina is genuine. But it still wouldn't prove anything. The Nazi, if he was an agent, could have picked the name Androtten from a casualty list and then written to the Dutch Government in the name of the soldier's father. I'll check the photos and the fingerprints here, and also with American F.B.I. and the British. The F.B.I. has been very good lately. They've helped out terrifically here with technical things."

A green light on Lobo's desk began to flicker. "It's the file room," he said. "I guess they have the Ansaldo dossier." He called the lieutenant on the inter-phone, told him to bring in the Ansaldo dossier.

The dossier was not very long. It told the story how, in the winter of 1938, a prominent Cuban Falangist in the best of health had suddenly taken to bed with a "serious complaint." His family announced to friends that they had sent to Spain for a great doctor, one Varela Ansaldo. They said Ansaldo cured the Cuban, to be sure, but he also had long private sessions with the leaders of the Falange at the Spanish Embassy and, before he returned to Franco Spain, the Falange in Cuba had undergone a complete shake-up of its leadership. There were pictures of Ansaldo, but alone and in plain clothes.

"Are these the only pictures?" Hall asked.

"Perhaps not. We took about three thousand feet of movie film from the Inspector General of the Falange for Latin America when he tried to escape to Spain on a C.T.E. ship two years ago. Let's look at them, old man." He pressed a key in his inter-phone box. "Pablo," he barked, "set up those Villanueva films in the machine. I'm coming in in ten minutes."

"I didn't think of that film," Hall confessed. "Every time you were supposed to show it to me, something came up, remember?"

Lobo was barking into the inter-phone again. "Teniente, scare up two cold bottles of champagne for the theater, will you? We have a thirst that is killing us."

"Are you screening the film in a theater?"

"No. It's a crime laboratory the F.B.I. installed for us. The whole works. Wait till you see it, Matt. It's just like Hollywood. Colossal!"

"And the champagne?"

"That's my own contribution. I'll be damned if I can stop drinking champagne in the middle of a party just because Johnny Green Moon drags me out. Come on, let me show you the joint." He led Hall on a ten-minute Cook's tour of the crime laboratory, his patter a slightly off-color imitation of an American tourist guide's spiel. A small beaded screen had been pulled down from the ceiling, facing two chromium-and-leather lounge chairs. When the lieutenant brought in the champagne in two ice buckets, General Lobo signaled the soldier in the tiny projection booth to start the film.

There was everything but a shot of Ansaldo.

"He was too smart, the *cabrón*," Lobo said. "Let's go back to my office and think it over." He poured what remained of the champagne into Hall's glass.

On the way back to his office, he asked the lieutenant to join Hall and himself. "Lieutenant," he said, "here are some pictures and data on a man named Wilhelm Androtten, and some notes I made. Put them all through the mill—our own files, F.B.I., the British. Check the papers and letters of Villanueva and Alvarez Garcia for any reference to Varela Ansaldo. And give me a report by noon tomorrow. Anything else you can think of for the moment, Mateo?"

"One thing. Those pictures of Gamburdo at the secret Falange dinner in San Hermano. Remember it? I want about six microfilm negatives of each shot."

"Give them to me with your report, Lieutenant."

The young officer accepted the papers, saluted smartly, and left.

"There's one place in Havana where I can get that picture, Jaime," Hall said. "The Spanish Embassy has a complete file of the Spanish *Arriba*, and I'll stake my life on that picture of Ansaldo's being in that file."

"So?"

"Listen, Jaime, I don't know if I'll have to examine that file. I won't know until some time tomorrow morning. There's an outside chance that old man Nazario has the *Arriba* we need in his collection at the University. But please, Jaime, if I do have to go through the files on Oficios Street, I don't want any of your excellent boys from Oriente Province giving me a nice case of Cuban lead poisoning."

Lobo, who had opened his collar and draped his long feet over his desk, stopped smiling. He put his feet on the floor, buttoned the tunic collar. "You don't understand," he said, speaking to Hall in Spanish for the first time that evening. "In there, with the foolish movies, I make foolish sayings. At the circus Lobo becomes the clown. But please remember, Mateo, that I am a

Latin American. My own people were driven out of Spain by the spiritual forefathers of the Falange. I know what will happen to Latin America if the Falange crowd wins out anywhere."

"I know you do, Jaime."

"I'm not always the playboy, Mateo. I know what my chief means to the little nations of the Caribbean. I know what Don Anibal means to every country south of Miami. I love Don Anibal. I love you because you love my chief and my people and Don Anibal. *Claro?*"

"Thanks, Jaime. Then you'll tell your men I'm O.K.?"

"On the contrary, my friend. I must tell them much more than that."

"Thanks. I'll try not to make any trouble. No international incidents."

"If you don't have to shoot." Lobo became gay again. "Ay, Señor Ortiz Tinoco," he sighed, "you might want to shoot, but you are without a shooter to shoot with. My men are too good for you. They stole your gun."

"They are very good men, my general."

"They have a good chief. But look, friend, in this drawer. I have a treasure for you." He emptied the contents of a canvas bag on the desk. "Ay, Señor Ortiz Tinoco, when I relieved Jefe Villanueva of his super-production, I also took his gun. Such a wonderful little Swiss automatic, built to be carried in a lady's purse or a horse's—ear. And such a dainty Spanish leather shoulder holster. You would be a fool not to accept this outfit in return for your gigantic cannon."

Hall took off his jacket. "It's a deal," he said. "Help me get the holster on."

"Where are you going when you get the picture—if you get it, Mateo?"

"Caracas. Someone is meeting me there."

The General laughed. "Caracas? Ay, we'll get you back to Caracas in style, *chico*." He opened his cigar box, held it out in front of Hall. "By the way, Mateo," he said, "I never asked you before. Are you a Red?"

"No. I'm a Red, White and Blue Kid. Why?"

"Your government. Your embassy in San Hermano was sure that Pepe Stalin was paying for your rice and beans. They asked your Embassy here to check on you with me."

"What did you tell them?"

"Naturally, I told them that you were an agent. *Si,* señor! I told them that you were a triple agent: mornings for the Kuomintang, afternoons for the Grand Llama of Tibet, and evenings for the Protocols of Zion. You'd better be careful when you get back to New York."

"You bastard!"

"Where are you going now? Me, I'm going right back to that party. I promised a certain Vassar female, in my halting English, that I would be back. Can I drop you anywhere?"

"I'm going to the Casa de la Cultura."

"Good. But listen, Mateo, give me at least five hours' notice if you decide to do any scholarly research on Oficios Street, eh? *Vámonos.*"

Chapter sixteen

Don Anibal Tabio died at ten o'clock the next morning. He died on the operating table, under Ansaldo's knife.

Hall was in Santiago's office when Eduardo Sanchez called at eleven to say that an AP flash had just come through in the newspaper's wire room.

"Call me when the next bulletin comes through," he said, slowly. "We have to know what Gamburdo and Lavandero are planning." Somehow, although he had known for days that Tabio's hours were numbered, it was hard to swallow his friend's dying on Ansaldo's terms. He was too stunned to wonder how Gamburdo had finally won out. For a moment, there was a sensation of sudden emptiness; this gave way to a sense of horror and rage.

"Poor Anibal," he said. "Charging the arrows of the Falange with only the white plume of Truth in his thin hands."

"He was your friend, wasn't he?" Santiago said. "He was a very great man."

"Yes."

"Would you like a drink, Mateo?"

"No, later. Call de Sola again. Tell him to hurry up. I'm going to the Mexican Embassy. I have to leave an envelope with the secretary. I'll be back in less than an hour."

"*Bueno.*" The Spaniard walked to the door with Hall. "There has been a good change in you, Mateo," he said. "I remember the day when such a blow would have sent you off like a wild bull. It is better to fight them back the new way, no?"

"You should know, Colonel Iglesias. You should know." Hall stopped off at a bar on the way to his hotel for a quick double brandy to steady his nerves.

The manager of the Jefferson avoided Hall's eyes when he handed the attaché case back to him. "The señor will notice that the seal is unbroken?" he asked.

"It is a new seal," Hall said. "But be tranquil. I was present at Secret Police Headquarters when the seal was broken. And please tell your clerk that I am not angry with him." He put the case under his arm and took a cab to the Mexican Embassy.

There was more bad news when Hall returned to the Casa. The files of Franco publications kept by Doctor Nazario at the University had also failed to produce the needed picture of Ansaldo. And a messenger from Eduardo Sanchez had brought for Hall a copy of the first AP bulletin from San Hermano.

Hall read the bulletin aloud for Santiago and Rafael. "The wily bastard!" he said, reading how Gamburdo had decreed six days of official mourning and a national election on the seventh day following Tabio's death. "'As our beloved Educator's chosen deputy and successor, I can promise the people of the Republic a continuation of the peace which was ours under Don Anibal's wise leadership. I can promise that any warmongers who would destroy this great blessing left to the nation by Don Anibal will immediately feel the wrath of the government. It was Anibal Tabio's last wish that our Republic be spared from suffering the ravages of a war that is neither of our making nor of our choosing.'"

"I hate politicos," Rafael said. "They are a stench in the nostrils of decent people."

"Tabio was a politico, too," Santiago said, sharply. "What else does it say, Mateo?"

"It says that the Radicals and the Nationals have already nominated Gamburdo. The Progressives and the Communists are meeting this afternoon to select Lavandero as their candidate, and the Socialists are asking both candidates for guarantees against Bolshevism before making up their minds. The Traditional Nationalist Action Party—that's the Cross and the Sword—are out a hundred per cent for Gamburdo."

"What the hell are the Socialists stalling for?" Rafael shouted. "Where are their brains?"

"You mean," Santiago answered, gently, "where is their socialism?"

"Listen to this," Hall said. "'The body of the President will lie in state for six days in the Great Hall of Congress. Acting President Gamburdo has ordered a hand-picked elite corps of army and navy officers to maintain a twenty-four-hour watch over the bier.' An elite corps for Don Anibal!

"And listen to this: 'In the name of the Republic, Acting President Gamburdo thanked the noted surgeon, Varela Ansaldo, for his last-hour effort to save the life of the late President, and announced that he would recommend to the Congress that Dr. Ansaldo and his assistant, Dr. Marina, be given formal decorations. Gamburdo revealed that Ansaldo, who came to San Hermano at his urgent pleas, left the mourning capital at noon on the first leg of a flying voyage to Lisbon where he is to perform a delicate operation on a prominent jurist.'"

"They got away!" Rafael said.

"It's not so bad," Hall said. "That is, it won't be if ..."

"Of course, Mateo. If we can pin the arrows on Ansaldo after this statement," Santiago said, "it will be very hard for Gamburdo to explain to anyone. Especially since you have that picture of Gamburdo at the secret Falange dinner."

"I have more than that. I have a copy of the report the Inspector General of the Falange made about Gamburdo at that dinner, and it's written on official stationery. We've just got to get more on Ansaldo!"

"Are you still against raiding the Embassy, Rafael?"

"I changed my mind. When do we do it? Tonight?"

"I hope so, Rafael, you'll have to find Dr. Moré. I think you'll catch him in at the clinic now. Tell him to get Rivas and bring him to his own house in Vedado."

Hall took out his wallet. "Here, Rafael, you'll need money for taxis."

"Are you crazy, Mateo? This is a hundred-peso note."

"You'll also need a new suit. They won't let you into the Spanish Embassy in those clothes."

"I'll buy my own clothes!"

"Rafael," Santiago said, gently, "Hall is our *compañero*."

The boy began to blush. "I am sorry," he stammered, "but it is not my way to accept such offers."

"I don't offer it to a man," Hall said. "I gave it to an officer of the People's Army. It is money intended to aid that army in its fight."

"Hurry up, Rafael," Santiago said. "We will argue after we get out of the Embassy—if we get out."

"I've got to see Lobo," Hall said when Rafael left. "I've got to tell him to ask the American Intelligence Service to check on Ansaldo's movements in Lisbon. I don't think he is going to operate on any Portuguese jurist or anyone else in Lisbon."

"You'll make a fool of yourself, Mateo. You're not dealing with stupid Spanish fascists like Franco and Gil Robles. You're dealing with the German Nazis who run the Falange. I know them. They're too smart not to have a patient waiting in bed for Ansaldo when he gets to Lisbon. Why don't you see Lobo after our conference with Rivas? In the meanwhile, I'd better get statements from de Sola and Carlos Echagaray on Ansaldo and Marina."

Meeting Fernando Rivas in the home of the Cuban doctor, Hall was reminded of what an acid-tongued Czech journalist said to him at Geneva about Chautemps, a French politician. There was nothing wrong with the politician, the Czech said, except that he had the face of a traitor. In a city where the sun always shined, Rivas had the pallor of a skin which never saw the sun. He sat tensely at the edge of the chair in Moré's study, hands working a battered Panama, his puffy eyes darting furtive looks at Rafael and Hall, men he had never seen before but whom he obviously suspected of being agents of the Republican underground. Hall thought: this is a man who can no longer know hate or love or anything but fear.

It was Santiago's show. He ran it on his own terms. From the outset, he made it clear that he, or rather the Republic for which he spoke, was giving the orders. They were given decently, temperately, but not without the proof that force lay behind the commands. Rivas was to address him as Colonel.

"And these," he said, indicating Rafael and Hall, "are my aides, Majors Juan and Pancho."

"What is it you want of me, Colonel? There is nothing I would not do for you."

"For whom?"

"For the—for the Republic."

"What Republic?"

"The Republic of Spain. The Republic of the Constitution of 1931."

"And why should the Republic trust you now, Rivas?"

"There is no reason, Colonel. I can ask only in the name of my family."

Rafael had seen the older brother of Rivas die charging a German battery near Bilbao. "It is not your privilege," he said. "I knew your brother." Hall laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"You betrayed your family when you betrayed your people," Santiago said, softly. "It is not good enough. I must have a better reason."

"State your own terms," Rivas said. "I will meet them."

"Why?"

The traitor took out a silk handkerchief, mopped his face. He suddenly seemed to grow, to straighten his back. His head held high, he looked each man proudly in the eyes. A moment earlier, his hands, his lips had been quivering. Now they were firm and still. "Why?" he repeated in a new, stronger voice. "Why?" He was fighting for one last chance, fighting with his remaining reserve of dignity. "I'll tell you why, my Colonel. Because I

don't care whether I live or not. But I want to die as a Spaniard, as a free man again. I want to die as a Republican. Is that reason enough?"

Colonel Santiago Iglesias was not a cruel person. He hated to play cat and mouse with a human being, even with such as Rivas. But his first responsibilities were to the Republic. "I hardly think so," he said, speaking as an officer, although as a man he knew that Rivas had stated a good reason, because he knew the reason to be true. "I hardly think so, Rivas," he said. "Merely because the wife of a man who betrayed the Republic turns out to be a whore is no reason for the Republic to love him more."

Fernando Rivas bent forward, as if he were trying to ward off a heavy series of blows. "No," he said. "It is not reason enough."

The thin body of Rafael Abelando shook with silent laughter for a moment, and then it became still. The young major turned to Santiago, his face filled with a sudden pity for the wreck of a man in the chair. Hall caught the look, too, the admission of something Rafael would have died rather than say out loud. The boy was ready to give the traitor Rivas his last chance. It was the moment Santiago had been waiting for; without Rafael's implicit confidence in his plan, he had all but decided to call it off.

"What do you think, Pancho?"

Hall nodded agreement.

"And you, Major?"

"The hell with what I think. I'll do my thinking later. If he comes through, I'll tell you what I think. If he funks out on us, I'll slit his throat."

"All right, Rivas," Santiago said. "We will give you your chance. We need your help tonight."

"Shall I come armed? I am an expert marksman, Colonel."

"No. We shall carry the arms. You shall carry the key—or the keys. We want to get into the third floor of the Embassy, and we want to get out alive—and without shooting. Can it be done?"

Rivas raised his head, stared into the faces of the three men who held open the gates of the Republic. "I am willing," he said. "It might take some planning, gentlemen, but it can be done." He held out his hand to Santiago. The colonel accepted it.

"I am glad you are with us," Santiago said. "In a sense, you are the most fortunate of the four of us. You see, Rivas, if we should all get killed tonight, yours would be the most lasting memorial."

"But why me, Colonel?"

Santiago picked a heavy manila envelope up from the floor. He took out the photographs of the memoir on Franco's Spain that Rivas had written in his own hand. "You see," he said, "if we should all die tonight, the Casa de la Cultura will publish your excellent memoir—with a postscript about your heroic sacrifice."

"But how?" Rivas gasped. "Where?"

"You are surprised, Rivas? Please let me assure you that there are many of us. We are everywhere where *they* are. *Claro?*"

"I understand." For a fleeting moment Rivas had been back with the Republic, a free man among free men. Now he was again a prisoner, but with two jailers—Franco and the Republic. Now the Republic could force the other to destroy him. "Yes," he said, "I understand." The Republic, he knew, gave him his choice of executioners or his opportunity to fight for his freedom.

"Well?"

"I am grateful," he said. "I am grateful for the chance to belong to the Republic again."

"Good. We must plan. Shall we drink on it?"

There was a decanter of Scotch whisky on Dr. Moré's sideboard. Santiago filled four glasses to the brim, then called for and filled a fifth glass. "It is for the other who will be with us tonight," he said. Eduardo was getting the affidavit on Ansaldo from the exile in Marianao.

"To the Republic!"

Hall watched Rivas drink his Scotch in one greedy, hysterical gulp. He quietly filled the man's glass, shoved the bottle toward him. Rivas downed the second Scotch, reached for the bottle, then changed his mind as his hand was in mid-air.

"Paper," Rivas said. "The desk. I must draw a floor plan of the Embassy."

At eleven o'clock, Rivas let Santiago and his three friends into the Spanish Embassy through the rear door.

At ten-thirty, a large but unscheduled military parade started winding through the streets of Old Havana. No one seemed to know what the parade was about, but the soldiers in the ranks thought that it had something to do with a surprise party being given to General Jaime Lobo to celebrate his promotion in rank. It was his old regiment which had been called out at nine that night and ordered into parade formation.

At ten forty-five, the paraders were halted for some reason, and the General's runners motorcycled down along the line of march and told the

bandmasters to keep on playing the liveliest of tunes. The order reached the second band in the line just as it stopped in front of the Spanish Embassy.

A crowd gathered to listen to the band and watch the parade. Santiago, Hall, Rafael and Eduardo casually detached themselves from this crowd at precisely eleven.

Rivas led them quietly up the back stairs. The blare of the brasses, the booming of the drums, the crashing of the cymbals penetrated every corner of the Embassy. "God is with us," he said. "The noise is wonderful."

Hall bit his tongue. A fat lot God had to do with it! He was crawling behind Santiago, the Swiss automatic in the right hand cocked at his hip. Eduardo was behind him, and ahead of Rafael. "Third floor," he whispered. "We turn left at the head of the stairs and climb three steps."

Santiago pulled out his gun as they approached the third-floor landing. He allowed Rivas to get a few steps ahead of him, to take the three steps which led to the library. "Go in with Rivas," he whispered to Hall. "You too, Eduardo."

They followed Rivas into the dark room. He was standing near a draped wall, motioning to them to follow him quietly. "Behind the drape," he said. Eduardo closed in next to him. He frisked him for hidden knives or guns. "Don't move," he said.

Santiago joined Eduardo and Hall. "Rafael is covering the door," he said. He motioned to Rivas to approach the drape. Eduardo remained at the traitor's heels, the gun in Rivas's back. Hall knew what to do. He waited until Santiago flattened himself out against the wall which paralleled the drape, then he quickly drew the cloth to one side. He found himself facing a large steel cabinet built into the wall.

"Open." Santiago's fingers twirled an imaginary dial before his nose. "Open it, Rivas."

The frightened man who was both host and hostage raised his hand slowly, fingered the dial, dropped his hand in disgust. He dried his sopping fingers against the front of his jacket, tried again. The tumblers of the lock rose and fell; the lock remained closed. Santiago slowly released the safety catch of his pistol. "What passes?" he asked.

"Ssh," Rivas pleaded. "I'll try it again."

"Wait." Hall held a small bottle of brandy up to Rivas's face. "Take a drink. It will steady your hands."

"Many thanks."

"Open it."

"It's coming, Colonel."

Santiago looked at the luminous dial of his wrist watch; eight minutes gone. The band would not be under the window all night. He beckoned to Hall. "That white door near the window, Mateo. He says you will find the *Arribas* in there perhaps."

"I'll try it."

"He's opened the steel door," Eduardo said.

"Keep him covered." Santiago stepped in front of Rivas, opened the door as wide as it would swing. He faced a multitude of locked steel drawers.

"Let me," Eduardo said. He changed places with Santiago. He was good at picking such picayune locks; the concentration camp on the Isle of Pines was full of native fascists whose careers ended when Eduardo jimmied open

the locks that protected their secrets. He could crack them open swiftly, almost noiselessly.

"There's one," he whispered. "Two."

"He has a talent," Santiago said to Rivas.

Hall glided over to the white door of the closet. Like the others, he wore soft-soled rubber shoes. He took a small oil can from his pocket, saturated the hinges and the handle of the white door. Slowly, he opened the wooden door. A book balanced precariously on an upper shelf behind the door started to fall. He grabbed it with his left hand. A rash of invisible pimples spread over his scalp. Too much noise that time, even though the book didn't fall. He held his breath, counted to twenty. The band was still blaring, the drums pounding away. Good old God!

He ran the slim beam of the dime-store flashlight over the shelves. *Informaciones, A.B.C.*, ah, here, *Arriba*! He turned to signal to Santiago that he had found it, but the colonel had again changed places with Eduardo, was now emptying documents from the little steel drawers to the inside of his shirt.

Rafael, standing guard at the doorway, wildly signaled Hall to get to work on the files. He pointed vigorously to the non-existent watch on his narrow wrist.

Hall dug into the *Arriba* pile. He pulled the top of the 1938 batch to the floor, sat down in front of them. April. May. June. Not here. Impossible! He sneaked the remainder of the brandy into his throat. Once again. April. He looked at Santiago, working calmly; light flickering over the papers in the drawers, eyes selecting the wheat from the chaff. The problem is April. It happened in April, 1938. Easy does it. April One. April Two. Three. Four. Seven. Nine. No. No. Not yet.

Santiago was in the middle of the room, his hands crammed with papers. He beckoned to Rafael, stuffed batches of papers into the major's shirt.

"Got the bastard!" Hall said. He forgot to whisper. He climbed to his feet, a yellowing newspaper in his hands. "Got it!"

A door opened on the floor above. "Rivas?" someone on the fourth-floor landing called.

Rafael was still in the room. Santiago held his shoulder, shook his head. Stay here, he motioned. He signaled for Rivas, handed him his own gun. He pointed to the third-floor landing, smiled at the man.

The four men in the room covered the back of Fernando Rivas as he advanced toward the landing, the warm gun gripped firmly in his sweaty hand. They watched him stick his head out of the door, say, hoarsely, "Yes. It's all right," the gun hidden behind his thigh.

"What's all the noise?" Fourth Floor again.

"Parade."

"What are you doing there?" No suspicion—just conversation. Anyone could see Fourth Floor only meant conversation. Anyone but Rivas. To a man, the four behind Rivas prayed he would stall off the man above him with a polite nothing.

"None of your business, you fascist pig!"

Over and above all the noises of the city, of the band on the corner, of the hearts thumping in the breasts of the four men in the room there fell a whining silence which was both hours long and seconds short. Then the silence was shattered by the crashing explosions of two heavy pistols.

"Let me." Rafael ran to the doorway, flattened out against the wall. His eyes took in the prone body of Rivas at the landing and the heap of man sprawled on the stairs. Rivas was dead. His gun lay near his head. The man on the stairs still held onto his gun. Rafael reached behind him for the silent weapon, the weapon you used on lone forays into enemy territory, on guards in concentration camps.

The knife flashed over his head, pinned the hand with the pistol to the wooden stairs. Behind the knife flew Rafael. Once again the blade was raised, this time with a hand still on it as it descended.

Eduardo pulled Hall's sleeve. "Quick," he said. "The stairs. Follow me."

"All right," Rafael said to the dead Rivas, "now you're a Republican."

The watch on Santiago's wrist read 11.29 when Rafael, the last man to leave, melted into the crowd around the band. People on the sidewalk could hear feet pounding heavily through the large empty rooms of the Embassy. Lights were going on in all the dark windows. Yells. A woman's scream.

At the head of the parade, a baton twirled. The uniforms started to move forward. The crowd on the sidelines followed the band.

Later, sitting in Lobo's office, the mass of documents from the shirts of Santiago and Eduardo and Rafael on the desk before the general, Hall remembered his outcry when he found the picture of Ansaldo and the Axis officers giving the fascist salute. My "got it!" got poor Rivas, he thought. I'm still an amateur at it. Santiago was good; found dynamite, but he kept his mouth shut. Eduardo was good; cracked the locks and kept his mouth shut. Rafael was good; finished off the bastard from the Fourth Floor in seconds, and remembered to use a knife, and kept his mouth shut until it

was all over. Funny the way he stood over what remained of Rivas and said, "All right, now you're a Republican." Mocking, yet respectful. It was good; no forgiveness for the dead man's treachery but respect for his insane courage.

"It was a nice band concert, yes?" Lobo said. "Plenty of bim bam boom in the drums. Tsing! Tsing! Cymbals. Tarantara, tarantara."

"Sure."

"I'm a one-man band, eh, keed?"

"Colossal."

"What's eating you, Matt? That little slob who killed himself with his big mouth?"

"It was my fault, Jaime. It was my big mouth."

The General picked up a fistful of the documents which had cost the life of Fernando Rivas. "What the hell is his life worth compared to the lives of the hundreds of American seamen who now won't be sent to the bottom by Nazi torpedoes in the South Atlantic? I'll say it again, Matt, and if you'd stick around long enough, I could prove it. By tomorrow morning I'll have at least twenty mucking bastards in the calabozo thanks to what's in these papers; twenty fascist snakes who are the eyes and the ears and the oil and the water of the Nazi subs in this part of the ocean. You did it—and at the cost of only one second-rate life. Isn't it worth it?"

Hall was going through the documents on the desk. Bombshells, most of them.

Mandato # 36: 1940. From: Inspector-General Delegación Nacional, del Servicio Exterior, de Falange Española Tradicionalista de las

J.O.N.S. To: Jefe Supremo, Falange de San Hermano. In Re: A.T.N. Effective immediately you will form Acción Tradicionalista Nacional, to replace organization of Falange ordered dissolved by the Jew-Communist betrayer, Tabio. You will replace Yoke and Arrows with new symbol of Cross and Sword. Until further orders, you will not enter Spanish Embassy or consulates. *Camarada* Portada will arrive with detailed orders within thirty days. *Saluda a* Franco! *Arriba* España!

Mandato # 74: 1941, Servicio Exterior. Confidential: Enrique Gamburdo entered Tabio government with permission and approval of the National Delegation of the Falange. *Camarada* Gamburdo is to be given the support and unquestioning loyalty due an Old Shirt. There will be no exceptions to this order. Signed ...

Orden # 107: 1941. Confidential: Our heroic Japanese Allies have today destroyed the Jew-Protestant-Marxist American fleet in Honolulu. *Camaradas* of the Cross and Sword must be prepared to defend the wise peace policies of *Camarada* Gamburdo against the Jewish war mongers who will now try to make the Kahal the government in San Hermano. El Caudillo has shown how the Motherland can frustrate the war mongers. Do not falter and delay the glorious hour of our final victory. *Camarada* Marcelino Gassau will soon arrive in San Hermano with instructions on how to help the victory. Signed ...

"Photograph these, will you, Jaime?"

Lobo was sorting out the documents in rough piles. Sabotage. Espionage. Undersea warfare. Guantanamo. Cuban politics. "The works," he grinned. "In a week, this haul will have crammed our prisons with fascist rats. If we didn't have to avoid treading on the toes of your State Department these

documents would be enough to put the Spanish Ambassador in the calabozo and bring about a break with Franco. But even if it happens, you won't be around to see it, Matt. You're leaving in exactly four hours."

"Four hours?"

"Just a minute. That's my private phone. Yes, General Lobo speaking." He put his hand over the mouthpiece. "Pick up the other phone. It's the Spanish Ambassador."

"O.K."

"Yes, Mr. Ambassador?"

"General! Something terrible has happened."

"Terrible?"

"There's been a murder in the Embassy. Someone broke into the Embassy and shot one of our attachés. Communists, I think."

"Is he dead? When did this all happen?"

"Five minutes ago."

Hall and Lobo looked at the wall clock. The hands showed ten minutes after one.

"Five minutes or hours, Mr. Ambassador?"

"Minutes, General. It just happened."

"Where did it happen?"

"On the stairs. The back stairs, between the third and fourth floors. It is terrible."

"Who is the man?"

"Elicio Portada, General Lobo. Poor Portada!"

"Just a minute." He put his hand over the mouthpiece. "Listen to those lies, will you? Only one body. Three hours to dispose of the Rivas carcass and search the files. Did you leave them in much of a mess, Matt?"

"I don't remember."

"It doesn't matter." The hand came away from the phone. "Hello. Yes, this is still General Lobo. Mr. Ambassador, I have very serious news for you. As the representative of a friendly neutral, I am sure we can count on your co-operation."

"What is it, General?"

"We happen to have incontrovertible evidence that the late Elicio Portada was connected with a Nazi-Falange ring in direct contact with German submarine fleets in these waters. My immediate deduction is that he was killed by members of this ring to keep him from confessing to us. He was on the verge of making a complete confession."

"What? It is preposterous! I shall protest to the Foreign Minister!"

"Suit yourself, señor. Our evidence is incontrovertible. In the meanwhile, thanks to your attitude as you now express it. I must remind you that while the crime was committed on what is legally Spanish territory, if you move the body one inch out of the Embassy grounds you will be moving it on to Cuban national territory. Do you understand me? Not one body is to be moved out of the Embassy without my consent. Not one body, do you understand?"

"My government shall protest your interference, General Lobo."

"Let them. I'm sending two men over to the Embassy. Tell them what happened. And make up a list of all of Portada's friends. We'll find the murderer on that list, I'll warrant." He hung up the telephone with a slam.

"Let him sleep that off," he laughed. "My super-dooper crime laboratory will prove that the Ambassador lied about the time of the shooting. My super-sleuths will find bloodstains on the third-floor landing—and I hope to Christ Rivas has a different blood type than Portada. My super-sleuths will keep a straight face when the fascists hand them the gun of the missing murderer. Then my colossal courtesy-of-the-F.B.I. crime laboratory will find Rivas's fingerprints on the gun. Mystery: where is Rivas?"

"Have you got his fingerprints?"

"Teniente," Lobo shouted into the inter-phone, "send those Einsteins of crime to the home of Fernando Rivas of the Spanish Embassy. Bring back fingerprints: best place to find them is liquor bottle, razor, hair brush—and do it fast."

"Good going."

"I'll teach that fascist bastard to tell me nursery tales on the telephone at one in the morning." Lobo was growing genuinely indignant. "God, how I wish you didn't have to leave town, Matt. I'm going to be running a circus for the next two weeks!"

"I'll take a rain check on it, Jaime. Maybe I can come back in time for the closing day."

"Who knows?" Lobo sent for his aide, ordered microfilm copies of the documents to be ready in four hours. "And bring me the special belts and harnesses, Teniente."

"Did you get me a seat on a Panair plane? I thought Figueroa would take care of that."

"Better than that, my boy." Lobo crossed the room, opened a panel in the wall. It revealed a closet filled with uniforms. "Get into one that fits, Mateo. I have a seat for you on a Flying Fortress headed for Caracas."

"*Yanqui?*"

"*Yanqui.* You're traveling as Major Angel Blanco of my confidential staff. You are going south for me on a most delicate mission. You speak very little English, and you stink from pomade. Besides, you wear these thick glasses and you've been out on such a night of wild Latin debauchery that you sleep most of the time. In short, you are the Anglo-Saxon's dream of the stupid, conceited, lecherous Latin officer who can't hold his liquor."

"*Claro.* I'm repulsive."

"Yes, but you are also a walking microfilm file, only no one knows it. Your belt, your Sam Browne harness, the lining of your short boots, the inside of the visor of your cap are filled with identical sets of microfilms. Your pouch carries a letter from me to a General XYZ in code—and God preserve the sanity of anyone who attempts to uncode it. It will add up to precisely three tons of *mierda de caballo*."

Hall found a uniform that fit him. He got into it, smeared the proffered pomade into his black hair. "Do I carry any baggage?"

"We'll pack you a bag. Two extra uniforms, pictures of your wife, your mistress, and your mother, a pound of pomade, a few copies of the *Infantry Journal*—it will be all right."

"I can imagine. But before I go, Jaime, there's something I don't quite get. Why did the Spanish Embassy crowd have to hide Rivas's body? Why

couldn't they admit that he did it?"

Lobo adjusted Hall's tunic. "Elementary, my dear Watson," he said. "The Portada blighter was sleeping with the Rivas bloke's wife. It's the Ambassador's job to avoid scandals within the happy family. Admitting Rivas killed Portada over a rag, a bone, and a hank o' hair would be a confession the Ambassador couldn't run his own show. Elementary?"

"No. You're improvising, and the notes sound all wrong. Let me know about it when you really find out, Sherlock."

"Come back in two weeks." General Lobo yawned, stretched his long frame. "I'll take you to the American air base myself," he said. "I'll introduce you and act as your interpreter. And after you take off, you'll be on your own. Who's meeting you in Caracas, by the way?"

"Major Diego Segador. Know him?"

Lobo smiled. "You'll get through," he said. "Segador has nine lives, each of them tougher than the side of a battleship. Ask him to tell you what we did to those three Nazi heavyweights in San Souci in '39. *Madre de Dios*, Mateo, it was carnage!"

Twenty steps down the corridor, a Negro technician was focusing a sharp lens on page three of *Arriba* for April 27, 1938. The picture which spread across four columns of the top of the page was remarkably like the picture Hall had carried in his mind since that day with Jerry in San Hermano. The fans in the negative dryer were whirring over twenty-odd other negatives. Lobo was right, Hall realized. They were worth the life of one Rivas, they might yet take the life of a Hall. The stakes were worth the risk. Kill the beast in San Hermano, drive a knife into its arteries, keep it from crawling north and its foul breath beginning to stink up the clean air. Kill, so you can live again, kill, so you can go back to Ohio when the beast was dead, and

have children and not worry that some day they'd have to kill or be killed too. Kill for the same reasons the Rafaels and the Santiagos and the Lobos kill and you'll never have to lose a night's sleep.

"What are you thinking, Mateo?"

"I'm thinking of the girl I'm going to marry in two weeks."

"*Hijo de la gran puta!* He's in love, too! Let's go to the laboratory. We've got a lot to do before you go."

Chapter seventeen

The American Army plane banked sharply over the blacked-out Caracas field. Three times the four-motored ship circled the airport, breaking its speed, rousing the men who controlled the lights along the correct runways. During the second time around, Hall thought he saw a Douglas with the bright green-and-white flag on its wings. He was not so sure the third time.

The pilot brought his ship in gently. It rolled down the new concrete strip, a silver juggernaut in a cloud of red dust. Hall climbed out, gave the captain a silver cigarette case as a souvenir of the trip. The plane was not through for the night; it was to take on more fuel and proceed to a base farther south.

Hall went to the small operations building. He showed his papers to a sleepy official, had his passport stamped. "That Douglas on the other end of the field," he said to the official, "is that the plane from San Hermano?"

The official didn't know. He offered to find out. "It is not of importance," Hall said. He left his bag with the official. "I will be ready to go to the city as soon as the American plane takes off. Is that car for me?"

He went out to the field, stood chatting with the American flying officers as they stretched their legs and smoked while their plane was readied for the next leg of their flight. The boys were an agreeable surprise, or they had a C. O. with brains; each of them spoke some degree of Spanish, and to a man they were polite to the "Cuban officer" who had made the trip with them. It was a decent, non-condescending politeness.

"I am going to ask General Lobo to thank you all for your kindness," he said. "You are, as they say in English, *damn regular guys*!"

The young captain, who had given Hall his life history and his Seattle home address, was touched. "Aw," he said, "we're just ordinary Yanks, Major Blanco. Don't forget to look me up if you ever get to Seattle after the war. Then I'll show you some real hospitality. *Entiende?*"

"Oh, I understand perfectly, Captain. And you must visit me, too. You can always reach me through General Lobo." Hall, who had calmly appropriated the story of Lobo's boyhood and palmed it off on the captain as his own during the flight, began to laugh. "Oh, yes, Captain," he said, "we will have the most amazing reunion after the war."

"Well," the American pilot said, "we're shoving off now."

Hall exchanged salutes and handshakes with the Fortress crew. "*Hasta pronto,*" he shouted, as the last man climbed aboard. He remained where he stood, waving at the Americans, when he saw the outlines of Segador's thick shoulders emerging from the lighted doorway of the administration building. Segador was walking toward the Douglas.

He approached Hall, glanced at the Cuban uniform for a second, and continued on his way to the parked plane. There was no hint of recognition.

"Pardon me," Hall said to Segador, "have you a match, please?"

"Of course."

"Ah, Major, I see the stamp of the government match monopoly. Would you be from San Hermano, by any chance?"

In the darkness, Segador's hand crept toward the huge pistol in his holster. Hall held the unlighted match in his fingers. It was unbelievable; he was still unrecognized. He had been speaking to Segador in a disguised voice. "It is a very black night," he said in his normal voice.

"Yes—Colonel."

"Thank you, but it's major. Major Angel Blanco of the Cuban Army, señor." Then he struck the match, held it close to the cigar in his mouth.

"*Madre de Dios!* It's you!"

"Who the hell did you think it was, Diego? Wilhelm Androtten?"

"I am a fool. But the uniform, the glasses—this confounded blackness...."

"Is that the plane?"

"Yes. We can't take off until morning. I can't trust the night flying instruments. Was it worth the trip?"

"*In spades*," he said, in English.

"It was successful?"

"Very much, Diego. I found the picture. I found other things." He told him about the documents on San Hermano which Santiago had taken from the steel boxes. "If we stand behind the plane can we be seen by anyone?"

"No. Only by my men in the cabin."

"Good." They walked farther into the blackness, put the plane between themselves and any eyes that might be watching them from the field buildings. "Quick," Hall said, "give me your belt and take mine. It is loaded with a complete set of negatives."

The exchange was completed in seconds. "I've got three duplicate sets hidden on my person," Hall said. "Now they'll have to kill both of us to stop the truth from reaching San Hermano."

"I'm sleeping in the plane," Segador said. "You had better sleep in town. Did you arrange for a hotel, Mateo?"

"Lobo arranged a room for me through the Cuban Legation. There's a diplomatic car at the gate now, waiting to take me to town. What time do we start out?"

"A minute after sunrise."

"I'll be here. Can I bring anything from the hotel? Hot coffee? Beer?"

"No. We have everything. Even," he looked up at the plane and smiled, "even machine-gun belts."

Hall followed his eyes. He found himself facing the twin barrels of the machine guns in the side panel of the Douglas. There was a young soldier at the firing end of the guns.

"You do well, Sergeant," Segador said. "At ease."

"Can he use them, Diego?"

"He is a fantastic shot, that boy. He was in Spain. But you will meet him tomorrow."

"All right. But tell me one thing, if you can. It's been bothering me for days. How did Ansaldo...?"

"Don't. I hate to think of it, Mateo. The fascists put us all in a bottle. *El Imparcial* ran a big story on the front page—they charged that Don Anibal's only chance for life lay in an operation by Ansaldo. They also hinted that selfish politicians were tying Ansaldo's hands. The Cabinet had to capitulate."

"And Lavandero?"

"He didn't vote."

"Poor Anibal! What was it that finally killed him?"

Segador savagely bit the end off a cigar. "His faith in scoundrels!" he said, vehemently. "Enough, Mateo. Shut up before I—I ..."

Hall rode into town, had dinner sent up to his room. For an hour or so, he read the local papers. Then he turned out the lights, took off his tunic, opened his shirt collar, and put the Sam Browne belt with the hidden pockets on the bed beside him. It was to be a night of rest without sleep, a night of relaxing on the unmade bed with a hand never farther than six inches from one of his two guns. Twice during the long night he took benzedrine pills to keep awake. There could be no sleep until the plane was well under way.

The two-motored Douglas was warming her engines when the Cuban diplomatic car delivered Hall to the airport. "Drive right over to that bomber," he ordered. "Fast."

"Hey," he shouted before the car could skid to a stop, "taking off without me?"

Segador, freshly shaven, stepped to the doorway of the plane. "No. Get on board. We were waiting. Toss me your grip."

Hall tipped the driver of the car with a five-dollar note. "Give me a hand, Diego. I'm not an antelope." Segador and the young sergeant pulled him into the cabin.

"Meet my crew. Major Blanco—First Pilot Captain Millares, Co-Pilot Navigator Lieutenant Cuesta, Sergeant Mechanic Ruiz. They are a picked

crew, and they know what is at stake in this flight."

The flying officers were at the controls. They saluted Hall, bade him welcome. "Snub Nose says we can take off," the captain told Segador.

"Then let's take off. Snub Nose, give Blanco a hand with his safety belt. His hands are stiff."

The wiry little sergeant fastened Hall's belt. "A lot of good it will do you if we ground-loop, Major," he grinned.

This one was a Spaniard. Hall knew it at once. Young, no more than twenty-five, but very dry behind the ears. "*Chico,*" he said, "if we crash and I get hurt I'll murder you."

"You terrify me." Snub Nose was laughing with the animal glee of sheer happiness in being alive. "But I like you. I brought a bucket along just for you when you get air-sick."

"That's enough out of you, General Cisneros!" the first pilot yelled into the microphone in his fist. "Come on up to the office and stop bothering your betters."

"Call me when you feel sick," the boy roared at Hall, his strong-timbred voice rising above the blasts of the engines. He went up forward, stood behind the pilots as the big plane taxied into position and took off.

"I examined the negatives last night," Segador said. "They are worth all they have cost. Were they very hard to get, Mateo?"

"Two lives. But one was a doomed life. It was not hard."

"Feel like sleeping?" Segador pointed to an inflated rubber pallet in the bomb bay.

"I could use a few hours of sleep," Hall admitted. He made his way to the pallet, covered himself with an army greatcoat.

He slept heavily, waking only to eat, to stretch his legs once when they landed to refuel and show their papers to a new set of officials, and, finally, when Segador shook him and told him to put on his parachute.

"We're near the border," Segador said. He had a map and a heavy black pencil in his left hand. "Can you put it on?"

Hall had worn similar chutes while flying with the R.A.F. over France. He waved Snub Nose away with a derisive gesture. "Back to your nursery, *chico*," he said to the sergeant. "I was wearing chutes when you were in diapers."

"I'm sorry," Snub Nose said, deliberately misunderstanding, "we can't give you a diaper, señor. Just make believe you're wearing a diaper if you have to jump."

Hall looked out of the window. The late afternoon sun was beginning to wane.

"Look," Segador said, making a mark on the map. "We are here now. I'd planned on crossing our own borders just after dark. But we had a strong tail wind all the way. We're ahead of time."

"Good."

"It's not so good, Mateo. Most of the army is loyal, but for the last two months Gamburdo has been bringing the Germans back into the army."

"Germans?"

"We call them the Germans. I mean the sons of the *estancieros* and the *señoritos* who became officers under Segura while he had his Reichswehr

experts running the army. Tabio kicked them out, but he neglected to shoot them. The bastards are everywhere now. We have to assume that they know I left the country in a Douglas bomber. You might have been recognized in Havana or in Caracas by Falangist agents. The Germans are also able to put two and two together."

"I was very careful."

"But it cost two lives." Segador flipped a switch on the panel in front of his seat. "Attention, everyone," he said into his microphone. "Lieutenant, how soon before we reach the national border?"

"If we maintain our air speed, Major, we are due to cross the border in less than forty minutes."

"Good. Come back here, please." Then, while the co-pilot left his seat up front and started back to the seats near the bomb bay, Segador continued talking. "Captain, you know what we must expect. The fliers are all loyal; I don't think they would shoot down one of our own planes without permission of their chief. But there are too many Germans in the A-A arm. We may have trouble from the ground."

"I can fly higher, sir. We are now at seven thousand."

"Take her up to nine." He turned to the navigator. "How much will that put between our belly and the mountain tops at the border?"

"Three thousand, Major."

"Not enough."

"We can climb higher and fly on oxygen," the captain suggested.

"No. We've got to take this chance," Segador said. There was not enough oxygen on board, and only the major knew that this was because the chief

of the air arm feared the new officers who handled the oxygen depot.

"Navigator, take a look at my map." The pencil traced a straight line extending two hundred miles across the border. "Is this our course?"

"Yes, Major. We are flying on course now."

"Thanks." Segador looked at his watch, extended the pencil line another hundred miles into the country. "Snub Nose—how much flying time is left in our fuel tanks?"

"Three hours."

The point of the pencil came to rest at the end of the line Segador had drawn on the map. "Can we make this point on our gas and still have enough left to fly back to San Martin Airport *from the north*? It would mean flying a wide circle."

The navigator studied the map. "It can be done, sir."

"Good. Mateo, my plan is to drop by parachute with the negatives at this point. The plane is then to return and land at San Martin. You will then make your way to San Hermano by train and go directly to Gonzales by car."

"Will I be followed?"

"I have a man at San Martin. He will guide you."

"And you?"

"With luck, I'll be in San Hermano before you."

"All right."

"Nine thousand," the captain said. "Border ahead."

"Pour on the coals. Take your stations, men." Segador patted Snub Nose on the back as the youngster crawled into the glass bubble below the pilot's feet. The navigator went to the guns in the rear. "Stay here, Mateo," Segador ordered. He climbed into the mid-ship gun turret.

Hall had once been accustomed to being human super-cargo on board a fighting plane. This time the feeling irritated him. For want of something better to do, he took down a tommy gun from a rack near Segador's seat and examined it for dust and grease. It was immaculately kept. He laid it across his lap.

"Crossing the border now," the pilot announced.

The plane shot across the heavily wooded mountains, left them well behind in fifteen minutes. Hall followed the fading shadows of the plane as it sped over the foothills. In a few minutes, darkness would blot out the shadows, and then he would again know the strangely exhilarating feeling of being alone in the skies at night.

"Lieutenant," Segador said, "go up front and check the course."

The major and the sergeant remained at their guns. "More hills ahead," the navigator explained to Hall as he passed.

"No lights," Segador ordered.

Hall walked forward, stood behind the men at the instruments. The navigator was making his readings under a shielded blue light. Millares, the pilot, pulled back on his stick, slightly, begging altitude at a minimum loss of air speed as he climbed to put more distance between the plane and the string of lower hills which lay across their course.

The navigator suddenly became very busy at his radio. "Major," he said into his microphone, "we are being called by a ground station. They've spotted

us. They want to know who is in command, and what flight this is."

"Stick to your course," Segador answered. "Maximum speed." He crawled back to the main cabin.

"What shall I answer, Major?"

"Don't answer them. We'll just act as if we didn't pick up their signal."

"Yes, Major. They're repeating their request."

"Mateo," Segador said, "this is very bad. I don't know who controls the ground station. We can't take chances. I'm jumping as soon as it gets dark."

"That's a matter of minutes."

"I know. Navigator, the plan remains the same, except that I jump in ten minutes. Ignore all ground challenges on your way back to San Martin."

"I'm jumping with you," Hall said.

"No, you're not."

"If they shoot us down on the way back to San Martin, the negatives will fall into their hands, if they're not destroyed."

"Suppose we both jump and are both caught?"

"It's a chance I'd rather take, Diego." Hall opened the secret pocket in the visor of his Cuban Army cap. "Let me leave this set of negatives with Snub Nose. I have two more sets on me—in my Sam Browne and my boots."

"I have to think about it." Segador adjusted the harness of his parachute. Then he picked up his microphone. "Snub Nose," he ordered, "come back here. Adjust the *compañero's* parachute. He's jumping with me."

"*Bueno.* I'll show him how to use it, too."

Hall and Segador formally shook hands with the rest of the crew before they jumped.

For a few long seconds, plunging face downward, Hall could not think. He saw the plane pass over his feet, silver wings etched against the dark ceiling. He counted to seven, aloud, his voice lost in the wind. Then he pulled the release cord. There was the expected moment of tensing pain as the silk clawed at the night air and the straps of the harness cut into the insides of his thighs. In his mind's eye there was a picture he had forgotten: a sand-bagged office in London on a bright May morning, the English girl with the yellow crutch under her arm as she handed him the mail. Tear sheets on the series he'd done in Scotland. *Copyright 1940 by Ball Syndicate Inc., Somewhere in England, April 19, 1940.* This morning I took my place in line inside of a converted Lancaster, watched the man in front of me lean out and tumble into the clear sky, and then did exactly as he had done. I counted to ten, pulled my release cord, and ... And what a hell of a pseudo-romantic way to make a living, he'd said to himself and to the English girl that morning.

But tonight there was nothing phony about sitting in a canvas sling, falling through a wet cloud, eyes peeled for the white of Segador's parachute. Tonight he was no Sunday supplement kibitzer taking a joy ride amidst men rehearsing for death. Tonight he was finally in the war, as a combatant.

The tricks he had learned in Scotland served him in good stead now. He was able to play the cords of the parachute, guiding the direction of his descent so that he followed Segador. There was little time to think of anything but the operation of the moment. Fortunately, it was a green night. Like Segador, Hall could see from a thousand feet that they were dropping over a sloping meadow. At about two hundred feet, they could see that they were going to land in the middle of a flock of sheep.

The sheep began to bleat madly and run about in circles, as first Segador, then Hall, dropped into their pasture. Segador broke free of his silk, ran over to help the American. "Careful," he said. "With so many sheep, there must be a herder around. Let me do the talking."

A man in a woolly sheepskin cape was following a cautious sheep dog toward the spot where they stood. He carried a rifle.

Segador allowed the shepherd to approach to within fifty feet. "*Hola!*" he called. "We have disturbed your flock."

The shepherd said something to his dog, continued advancing slowly toward the two men from the sky.

"He is afraid we might be Germans," Segador said. "They hate the Germans worse than the devil in the country."

"Who are you?" The shepherd was now quite close to them. Hall could see at once that he was a Basque.

"Vasco?" Hall asked. He poured out a stream of Basque greetings. They served only to put the shepherd more on his guard.

"I saw you fall from the skies—like *quintacolumnistas*."

"That is true, *compañero*," Segador said. "But we are not fifth columnists."

"Are you of the Republic?"

"Yes."

"The other. He is not of the Republic. His uniform is different, and he speaks the tongue of my fathers badly."

"He is of the Republic of Cuba. He is a friend of our Republic."

"You both have guns," the herder said. He looked at his dog, who stood between him and the intruders. "If you are friends, you will give your guns to the dog. I am without letters, but if you are friends, you can prove it to an educated man in our village."

"What is your village?"

"You have guns."

"They are yours, *compañero*. See, I take mine. I lay it on the ground for your dog."

The shepherd addressed his dog in Euzkadi. The dog walked over to the gun, picked it up in his mouth, dropped it at the peasant's feet. He then made a trip for Hall's gun.

"You will walk in front of me," the shepherd said. "We will go toward that stile." He picked up the two pistols, shoved them into his skin bag.

Segador started to laugh. "I salute your vigilance, shepherd. We had two guns to your one. We could have shot you first. A coward would have run for help, first."

"Cowards do not serve the Republic," the shepherd said. He remained ten feet behind them, ignoring Segador's further attempts at conversation, marching them toward a thatched hut on the outskirts of a tiny village. When they approached the hut, the dog ran ahead, started to scratch on the unpainted door.

An Indian woman with a mestizo baby in her arms stood in the doorway when the three men reached the hut. "Let them in, woman," the shepherd ordered.

The inside of the small hut was dark and bare. On a pallet in the far corner, Hall could see the forms of children huddled in sleep, how many he could

not tell. There was a stone stove, a hand-hewn table and two benches. In another corner, a fragment of a tallow candle burned fitfully under a dim portrait. Hall realized, with an inward start, that the portrait was not of Jesus but of Anibal Tabio.

"Hold the gun."

The woman put the baby on the pallet with the other children, took the rifle in her hands.

"If you are of the Republic," the shepherd said, "you will allow me to tie your hands."

"We are of the Republic—and for the Educator, who is now dead."

The woman, who held the gun, backed away, closer to the picture, while her husband bound the hands of Segador and Hall behind their backs, and then connected all four hands with a third length of rope.

"Send your woman for the educated man," Segador said. "But hurry. We are on a mission for the Republic. We must not be delayed too long."

The shepherd took the gun from his wife. "Go then," he said to her. "Bring Bustamente the Notary to this house."

Two of the children on the pallet were now sitting up, staring at the visitors with wide, frightened eyes. Segador grinned at them. His eyes were growing accustomed to the darkness. "Go back to sleep, *niños*," he whispered. "We will play with you when you awake."

The kids ducked under the woolly coverlet, hiding their heads.

"Sit down," the shepherd said. "If you are friends, I will offer you the hospitality of this table." He started to roll a cigarette out of a fragment of newspaper.

"There are cigarettes in my pocket," Hall suggested. "Cuban cigarettes. Perhaps you would like one."

The shepherd rose from his own bench without a word, found the cigarettes, put two in the mouths of Hall and Segador. He struck a rope lighter, started their cigarettes. Then, still without speaking, he finished rolling his own cigarette and lit it. "If you are fifth columnists," he said, "I spit on your cigarettes." There was no rancor in his statement; it was a polite expression of simple logic.

His wife returned in a few minutes. She was with a nervous little white-haired man who clung to the waistband of his alpaca trousers. He carried a shiny alpaca jacket in his free arm—this and the steel-framed glasses on his ancient nose were his badges of authority.

"This is Bustamente the Notary," the shepherd said.

Bustamente fingered his glasses. "Yes," he said, alive to the importance of the moment. "I am the Notary." He squinted down his nose at the two men.

"Major Diego Segador, of the Republic. And this is my colleague, Major Angel Blanco, of the Cuban Army."

"They fell from the sky," the shepherd said. "Like fifth columnists."

"Is that true, Your Eminences?" Bustamente the Notary was taking no chances.

"It is true."

"And you have papers?"

"We have papers. Mine are in here. And yours, Major Blanco?"

The Notary adjusted his glasses, turned to the papers while the shepherd's wife held a candle over them. "Ay," he said. "They look real. Yes, I must admit they look real. On the other hand, I must also admit that I have never seen real Cuban papers." This was indeed a problem for the Notary. He scratched his chin, importantly, cleared his throat with a rumbling hawk. "What do you think, Juan Antonio?"

"I am without letters," the shepherd said.

"I must admit," the Notary said, not without sadness, "I must admit that I have never seen real papers of our own army."

"Please," Segador said, "it is important that we get to San Hermano. Is there anyone in this village who is not for the landowners or the mine owners or the Germans who has seen real papers? I ask this in the name of Don Anibal Tabio, in whose name we undertook our mission."

"Justice will be done," said Bustamente the Notary. "This is the era of justice, my good friends." He tried to punctuate his pronouncement with Tabio's famous gesture. To do this he had to release his waistband, and his trousers started to fall to his knees. From the pallet came a choking snicker.

"Silence!" Juan Antonio hissed to the kids on the dark pallet. "Show respect for Bustamente the Notary." His wife, at the same time, restored the Notary's dignity by handing him a length of cord to use as a belt. He fixed his trousers and then made the moment truly solemn by putting on his jacket.

"I am sure the Notary will dispense the justice of the Republic," the shepherd said.

"*Hombre!* This is very serious," Bustamente the Notary whispered. It was a loud stage whisper. "We must consider our decision with careful seriousness, Juan Antonio." He stepped outside of the hut.

Hall could hear his discussion with the shepherd. "The one who claims to be of us," the Notary said, "he does not talk like an enemy of Don Anibal, Mayhissoulrestinpeace. How does the other talk?"

"I do not know. He tried to speak in Euzkadi. It is not his tongue."

"It is, in a sense, suspicious then. But we must not be hasty. Justice begins in the village." The phrase was Tabio's.

"What are we to do, Señor Notary?"

"The laws of the Constitution of the Republic guarantee justice to all suspects, Juan Antonio. Please tell me all you know about the two officers."

He listened to the simple recital of the facts. "Ay, it is as I have observed, *amigo*. There is much to be said on both sides. If they were Germans or fifth columnists, perhaps they would have shot you first. On the other hand, since neither of us has ever seen a Cuban uniform, how can we tell? And if they are ours, why did they drop from the sky into the middle of a flock of sheep?"

"It is very deep, Señor Notary."

"Let us talk softer, Juan Antonio. Perhaps they can hear us inside."

They moved farther from the doorway, conversed in whispers for a few minutes, and then they started to walk down the dirt street of the village. Hall and Segador sat patiently, without exchanging a word. Once, while they waited for the shepherd and the Notary, Segador told Hall with a look that he thought everything was going to be all right. Then the two villagers returned with two horses and two donkeys.

"We have decided," said Bustamente the Notary, "that in the interests of full justice we must take you to see the school teacher in Puente Bajo. He will know what to do."

Segador sighed with relief. "Thank you, Señor Notary," he said. "And thank you, *Compañero* Shepherd. I am certain that your decision is the wisest one could make, and that we shall receive ample justice from the school teacher of Puente Bajo. But tell me, how far is the village from here?"

"It is less than five miles, Major."

"I am content."

The shepherd undid the cord that connected the bound hands of Hall and Segador and, because their hands were still tied behind their backs, he helped them mount the donkeys. He and the Notary climbed into the wooden saddles of their small horses, fastening the donkeys' leads to their pommels.

Segador smiled at Hall, whose donkey was being led by the shepherd. "Wonderful," he said. "Sancho leads the noble Don home from an encounter with the sheep."

"Please, gentlemen," Bustamente the Notary said, sharply, "you are not to address one another. Justice begins in the village, and justice"—again he aped Don Anibal's gesture—"and justice will be done."

"We bow to your authority in matters of justice," Segador said, gravely.

He and Hall sat in silence as the convoy cut across a meadow on the slope and turned toward the outlines of a larger village in the valley. They jogged toward the dim yellow lights of Puente Bajo, the shepherd piercing the night quiet with the curses he flung at the heads of the donkeys every time they balked.

At the outskirts of the town, Bustamente the Notary ordered a halt. "I have been thinking," he said. "It is my feeling that if the two on the donkeys are of the Republic and innocent, then we will have committed an offense

against their sacred dignity if we lead them into Puente Bajo fettered on mangy donkeys. I have therefore come to the conclusion that perhaps it would be better for me to ride on alone to the school and bring the teacher back to meet us here, by the road."

"I can agree," the shepherd said. "But wait until I tether their donkeys." He dismounted, led the donkeys to the side of the road and tied their forefeet to lengths of rope he fastened to a strong tree.

"Would you want one of your own cigarettes?" he asked Hall.

"Yes. Many thanks. And one for Major Segador, too. And please take one for yourself."

The shepherd declined with a serious face. "First," he said, "I must hear what the school teacher has to say about you. He is wiser, even, than Bustamente the Notary."

Bustamente the Notary and the man who was acknowledged to be even of more wisdom than he returned out of breath; the school teacher from trotting after the short horse and the Notary from talking incessantly to the pedagogue. The teacher was a compact mestizo in his early twenties, a short youth with a furrowed sloping Indian forehead and bright beady black eyes. He was wearing a pair of brown-cotton trousers, a blue shirt without a tie, and rope-soled slippers.

"Are you truly Major Segador?" he asked. And then, without waiting for the answer, he turned to the shepherd and began to berate him. "You fool," he shouted, "untie his bonds at once. Do you know that he sat in El Moro with Don Anibal?"

"I am without learning," the shepherd said.

"It is all right, teacher," Segador said. "The *compañero* did his duty—and he did it properly. Undo my hand, Juan Antonio, so that I may shake your hand."

"I am sorry, *compañero,*" the school teacher said to the shepherd. "I spoke to you without thinking."

"What is your name, teacher?"

"I am called Pablo Artigas." He helped Hall and Segador get off the donkeys. "I regret that you have had so much grief in our province."

"Are you a member of the Union?" Segador asked.

"Naturally. For three years—since I am a teacher. Before that I belonged to the Union of Students."

"And you have your *carnet*?"

"Not with me, Major Segador. It is in my room at the school."

"We will look at it. May we go with you?"

"I will be honored."

"Please, Your Honors," said Bustamente the Notary, "I insist that you ride the horses. The teacher may have one of the donkeys. I shall walk."

The shepherd reached into his sheepskin cloak. "Here are your pistols," he said.

Hall passed his cigarettes around. The shepherd accepted one with a shy smile. "I am glad that you are not angry, Señor Cuban Major," he said. "I have never had a Cuban cigarette before."

Chapter eighteen

"Fantastic! Sheer fantasy on paper, but it's all true. All roads lead to San Hermano. First, Lobo. Then, today, the man from Spain. Then ..." Felipe Duarte could not sit still. He walked around Hall's room at the Bolivar like a referee during a fast bout between flyweights. "Ostensibly, Lobo came to represent Batista at the funeral yesterday. Actually, he came to bring duplicates and even the originals of most of your negatives—as well as a report on Androtten. I don't know what's in the Androtten report yet; all I know is that the American Intelligence Service had something on it, and they gave it to Lobo."

"I tried to reach him on the phone."

"He's busy, Mateo. He's closeted with Lavandero. That's not all ..."

"I know, the de Sola affidavit. I'll have to tell you about Havana, Felipe. And about the all-night march to Cerrorico through the woods with Segador and the school teacher and the Notary's mules." *Mateo, eh Mateo, what did you see in the shepherd's hut? Tabio's picture? All I could see was poverty, Mateo.*

"Hey, you're not listening? What are you thinking of?"

Hall put his shaving brush down, inserted a fresh blade in his razor. "A thousand things. Cerrorico. The mining stronghold. Segador said the communists had a good press and that they were reliable. He wasn't kidding. They must have run off a million leaflets with reproductions of the Ansaldo pictures and the Havana documents by the time I left." Later, he would tell Duarte about the ride from Cerrorico in the engine cab of an ore train, and hopping off at dawn at the Monte Azul station, and being met by

a Pepe Delgado who wore a freshly washed and ill-fitting reservist's uniform and drove a small army lorry. Segador had gone ahead on an earlier train.

"You should have seen the leaflets yesterday, Mateo. Just as the funeral procession was at its greatest the army planes appeared overhead and started to drop the leaflets by the ton. And an hour after the leaflets fell from the skies, the pro-United Nations papers were all over the country with front-page reproductions of the pictures and the documents."

"And all that time I was sleeping on an ore train. Who is this man from Spain you mentioned, Felipe?"

"It is fantastic! After Mograd got my message, he rounded up two Spanish Army surgeons who knew Ansaldo. They made affidavits, too. That isn't the half of what Mograd did. He reached the Spanish underground in Spain via a cable to Lisbon. And this morning the Clipper came in from Lisbon, and what do you think?"

"I can't think. But don't tell me it's fantastic, Felipe."

"But it is fantastic. There is a man on board the plane, a typical *señorito*. He has papers with him that say he is a Spanish diplomat. The minute he steps ashore, a mug from the Spanish Embassy recognizes him. 'He is a fraud, a *rojo*, a defiler of nuns and an arsonist of cathedrals!' he shrieks. It's fantastic! The man with the papers lifts a heavy fist and he lets fly with a blow that knocks out the fascist's front teeth. 'Baby killer!' he hollers, and then he turns around to the airport officials and he says he is a Mexican citizen who used fake papers to escape from Spain and he demands that they take him under guard to the Mexican Embassy. In the meanwhile he says they'll have to kill him if they want to take his papers before he is delivered in person to the Mexican Embassy. Is it fantastic, Mateo?"

"For God's sake stop telling me that!"

"But it is fantastic! He makes them drive him to the Mexican Embassy, and the Spanish official is screaming like a stuck pig that the man is a Spanish citizen and an agent of the Comintern."

"Who is he?"

"He is a Spaniard, of course. The underground sent him. They had cadres in the office of the Falange National Delegation. They took out the Falange party records of Ansaldo and Marina, put them under a camera, and sent the pictures to San Hermano with this agent. It was a farce. I was in the next room, listening to him as he told the Ambassador that his name was Joaquin Bolivar. Then I walked in, the sweet light of recognition on my ugly face, shouting 'Joaquin! My old University pal, Joaquin! Don't you recognize your old Felipe Duarte?' The Ambassador just watches me. The man's papers are still in a sealed envelope before him.

"It is enough for him. He slams his hands down on the papers and says he claims them in the name of his government. 'I will take the responsibility for Señor Bolivar,' he says. 'I have reason to believe he is a Mexican national.' I ask you, Mateo—is it fantastic?"

"No. It's just efficient. Where is he now?"

"The Ambassador took him and his papers to see Lavandero. He's giving a deposition and an interview to the press."

"I ought to take in the interview."

"No. Stay away. Segador thinks it will be wiser if you stay away. But that isn't all. Do you remember the picture of Ansaldo that started you off on your wild-goose chase?"

"Vaguely. What about it?"

"There is a doctor in the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Puerto Rico. He is the head of the pro-Loyalist Spanish society on the island ..."

"Ramon Toro?"

"Toro. You know him? Well, he must be a man worth knowing. He has a collection of *Avance*—that was the Falange organ in San Juan, starting with issue number one. When he sees the picture of Gamburdo embracing Ansaldo—it was on the front page of *El Mundo* in San Juan—a bell rings in his head. He starts going through his *Avances*, and what do you think? He finds the picture you were looking for in an August issue. So he rips open his suitcase, pastes the whole issue of *Avance* between the linings, and arrives at the San Hermano airport last night. He doesn't stop. He takes his bag straight to the editor of *La Democracia*, empties it of his clothes, and pulls out the ..."

"Christ! Toro had it all the time!"

"It's on the front page of *La Democracia* this morning. I was in such a rush to get here that I left it in my office. I tell you, all roads lead to San Hermano. Every time I hear a plane overhead, I think, aha! more anonymous Republicans and underground agents and Cuban generals are coming in with more documents. It's fantastic!"

"Did anyone else turn up?" Hall was feeling better than he had in years. He was one of many now, he knew, one of an army who marched in uniform, out of uniform, but an army which knew the enemy and knew how to fight him. Mograd, Fielding, Duarte, Segador, Rafael, Pepe, Vicente, Iglesias, even poor Rivas for all his cringing and breast-beating—the army was strong, and it was growing stronger with the taste of victory. That was all that mattered, now.

"I guess that's the beginning of the end for the Falange," he said.

"The hell it is, Mateo." Duarte was coming down to earth. "It will be a long row to hoe. Your State Department has been distributing judicious hints that a unilateral policy toward Franco will upset the apple cart. They're after an all-Hemisphere policy toward Spain. All that this means is that none of the countries, except my own, will dare to break with Franco until Washington takes the lead. Not even this one."

"You're crazy."

"I'm a diplomat, Mateo. Mark my words."

"I hope you have to eat those words by the end of the week." Hall doused his face with bay rum, patted it with a towel. "When did they call the troops up? Pepe started to tell me about it when he drove me over last night, but I fell asleep as soon as he got started."

"Three days ago, Mateo. There was a meeting of the Student Council to Aid the United Nations at the University. The hall was packed. Then the Cross and Sword gunmen stormed the entrances and fired point blank into the crowd. There were over fifteen deaths, and so many injured that the University authorities established an emergency hospital in five lecture rooms. Your Jerry has been there since. The commanding general of this area is loyal to the Republic; he called up the reserves."

"What about Jerry? I've been trying to reach her all morning."

"She is wonderful. All the patients are trying to teach her Spanish."

"What are we waiting for? Let's go to the University."

"Not me. I've got to go back to the Embassy. Lobo says he can meet us both for lunch at the Embassy."

"I'll make it. Let's go. Oh, one more thing. I put through some calls to New York. And some are coming in. I gave your office as one of the places I

could be reached."

"Don't be late."

Jerry could spend only a few minutes with Hall on the University steps. "Gonzales told me that you were safe," she said. "And also what you accomplished. I'm proud of you, Matt."

"I worried about you," he said. "Were you scared when you found yourself in a war zone?"

"No. Just angry. Maria Luisa was at the meeting when the shooting started. She wasn't hurt, thank God, but she was a bloody mess when she got home. Gonzales and I left for the University at once. I've been here, since. We've had four deaths to date."

"When can you get away?"

"Not till dinner time. But things are easing up. We've been able to transfer more than half of our cases to the hospitals."

"The Bolivar at eight."

He took a cab to the Mexican Embassy. The driver was beaming as he shut the door. He told Hall that the early returns were overwhelmingly in favor of Lavandero. "Yes, señor," he laughed, "the fascists are on the run today. The lines formed outside of the polling places three and even four hours before they opened. Did you see what fell from the planes yesterday? Did you see the papers? Those dirty fascists!"

Duarte had figures to back up the cab driver's story when Hall reached the Mexican Embassy. "It is a wonderful victory, Mateo," he said. "The tide is

running so strongly that Gamburdo is expected to concede the election before the polls close at five."

"The bastard! Where's Lobo?"

"He'll be here in a minute. Let me show you some of the leaflets. I'll bet you haven't seen one yet."

The leaflet was the size of a standard newspaper page, printed on both sides. There was the large picture of Gamburdo embracing Ansaldo smack up against the shot of Ansaldo, in fascist uniform, giving the fascist salute along with the Nazi and the Italian officers. Most of the Falange documents proving the Axis ties of Gamburdo and the Cross and Sword were also reproduced on the single sheet.

"It turned the election," Duarte said. "Until yesterday, the fascists were spreading the story that Lavandero had kept Ansaldo from operating in time. Gamburdo was so anxious to grab the credit for Ansaldo that he dug his own grave."

"He's not in the grave, yet."

"Be patient."

Lobo walked into the office. He was wearing his regulation tan uniform. "Mateo," he shouted, "you're a fraud! I heard you were wearing a Cuban officer's uniform."

"It's in shreds, Jaime."

Lobo eased his long frame into Duarte's favorite chair. "I thought you'd never gotten through," he said. "After the second day of silence I was sure the fascists had clipped your wings. Don't bother to tell me about your hardships, though. I've already seen Segador."

"Everyone has seen Segador," Hall laughed. "Everyone but me. When the hell do I see him?"

"He's very busy, my friend. He's responsible to a government, you know, not to himself, like you."

"*Mierda!*"

"That reminds me. There's an American officer in town. From Miami."

"Intelligence?"

"Naturally. He's a very nice guy, Mateo. The American Ambassador's daughter here told him that you are an agent of the Comintern. He told me that he knew she was crazy. He asked me to tell you that he's a straight-shooter and he wants to speak to you. In a friendly way, of course. Name's Barrows. A lieutenant-colonel. Know him?"

"No. What about Androtten?"

"What about Barrows, first? If I were you, I'd give him a ring. He's at the American Embassy."

"All right. Shall I ask him to lunch with us?"

Barrows was not free for lunch. He arranged to meet Hall at Duarte's office at three. "He sounds human," Hall admitted.

During their luncheon, Lobo told Hall and Duarte what he had learned about Androtten from the American Government. The man was a German named Schmidt or Wincklemann (he had used passports in both names) who had a record as a German agent which went back to 1915. He had spent some time in Java, some years in Spanish Morocco, and the year of 1935 living in a villa at Estoril, the beach resort outside of Lisbon. "The

record doesn't say what he was doing in Portugal," Lobo said. "My guess is that he was working with Sanjurjo."

"I'd back you on that," Hall said. "The old rumhound needed someone to hold his hand before the war."

"There are blank spaces in the record after that," Lobo said. "The next entry is the spring of 1938, when your Androtten was known as Wincklemann. He turned up in Rome as an art dealer specializing in Spanish masterpieces. He sold two Goyas and a Velasquez to three rich ladies in the British colony; told them the paintings were from the private collections of Spanish noblemen who had been ruined by the *rojos*. He was lying, of course—the paintings had all been taken from Spanish museums by the Nazis. Wincklemann disappeared, and the ladies finally sold the paintings back to the Franco government in 1940 for the same price. The last mention of Wincklemann or Schmidt is a paragraph from a letter mailed to Washington from Mexico in July, 1941. The letter was from the junta of Dominican opposition leaders and mentioned a Gunther Wincklemann as one of four Nazi agents who had been guests of Trujillo in the Dominican capital that month."

Hall borrowed an empty office in the Mexican Embassy for his appointment with the American officer. It went off well. Barrows was a plain-speaking man in his early forties, with the handshake of a young and vigorous boiler maker. He had a nice, unhurried way about him, his frosty blue eyes surveying Hall with good humor while he fussed with his thick-walled pipe. "I'd heard all sorts of conflicting stories about you," he said, smiling at the conflicts.

"I can imagine," Hall said.

"I wish I could tell you half of them."

"I know the Ambassador's half. Heard it in Havana."

Barrows snorted. "Have you a match that lights?" he asked. "I've been trying to get this pipe started for days." He refused a cigar. It was a match that he wanted. Hall had a lighter whose flame burned long enough to light the pipe. "There now," he said, "now we can talk. I know that you heard about the Ambassador's report. If it will make you feel any better, Skidmore got his tail singed for it." He was highly amused.

"Good." Hall was warming up to Barrows. "I hate stuffed shirts."

"So do I. But frankly, Hall, I'd like to drop the subject. I—I need your advice. Unofficially, of course. But I need it. It's about the reports that the late Roger Fielding made to the British Embassy. You saw them, I understand."

"Only once. A few nights before he was killed."

"That's what I was told. Commander New in the British Embassy told me. He's not exactly up on the San Hermano scene yet, you know. He thinks that after the job you and Lobo did in Havana that he ought to turn the originals of the Fielding reports over to the government. What he doesn't know is who to hand them to. He wants to know who will use them and who will burn them. He thought that since you were an American, he'd ask me to get your slant on it."

"I get it," Hall said. "You want one guy who is certain to be an anti-fascist. Someone who will know just how to use the information."

"Exactly. I don't suppose I have to tell you, Hall, that the enemy has been sinking our shipping in the South Atlantic and the Caribbean at a rate that spells one hell of a long war. I know, as you do, that Falangist Spaniards on

shore are working with the Nazi undersea raiders. But even if we wanted to, we couldn't send enough Marines to South America to root 'em out. We've got to rely on the local governments to do the job."

"Yeah." Hall was bitter. "We want this Republic to root out the Falangists, so we send an Ambassador who plays footy with the Falangists in public and calls the anti-Falangist President a dirty Red."

"You're carping, Hall."

"All right. I'm carping. I'm a taxpayer, it's my prerogative to carp. We want the Latin American Republics to get tough with the Franquists who are helping the Nazis sink our ships, so we sell the Spanish fascists the oil they transfer to the Nazi subs, and we send an Ambassador to Madrid whose only exercise is kissing Franco's foot in public every Sunday morning, and when any of our sister Republics want to break with Franco we dispatch a sanctimonious buzzard in striped pants from the State Department and he tells them to lay off Franco, Spain's Saviour from Atheism and Communism. How in the hell can we expect the Latin Republics to crack down on Franco's stooges at home when we ourselves play up to Franco in Madrid?"

"Let's have that lighter again." Barrows was cool and unruffled, the smile that danced across the smooth lines of his face never wavered. "I'm a soldier," he said, pleasantly. "I can't discuss policy. I can only talk tactics. You know that, Hall. Tactics is the art of working with an existent situation and licking it—not waiting for the millennium. You think our policy toward Franco Spain should be changed. Maybe you're right. Maybe it will be changed. But, in the meanwhile, Franquists in Latin America, in this country specifically, are putting the finger on our ships. Fielding's reports might be accurate. If we are to act on them, we need the help of pro-Allied members of this government. Who is our man?"

"There is one man in these parts who can be trusted completely to do the right things with those reports," Hall answered. "Give him the reports, and after the polls close he'll be in a position to round up every fascist Fielding listed and put them on ice for the duration. He's an army man—Major Diego Segador."

"And you think he's our man, eh? Would you mind writing his name in my book, and the best place to reach him?"

Hall carefully printed the information Barrows wanted and then, as he returned the book, he said, deliberately, "But there's one thing you should know about Segador. He's everything I said he is, and more. But he's also a leftist. He's very close to the Communist Party."

"So what?" Barrows said, casually. "The Russians are killing plenty of Germans, and I understand their chief is a member of the party, too. Man named Stalin, or something like that."

"Do you mind if I call you unique?"

"Not at all. But let me ask one. What are you planning to do for the duration? Ever think of G-2?"

"Yeah. I applied before Pearl Harbor. They turned me down so hard I thought I was hit by a truck. I applied again on December 8th, 1941. It was still no soap. I was for the Loyalists in Spain, you know. That made me what the brass hats term a 'premature anti-fascist' and definitely not officer material."

"I didn't know about that," Barrows said. "What would you do if the door was opened for you now? Understand, I'm not making an offer. I'm just asking."

"I don't know," Hall said. "I don't think the door would be opened. If it was —I'd have to think about it."

"May I have your lighter again?"

Hall watched Barrows make a major operation of relighting his pipe, and recognized it as the officer's neat device for creating a break in a conversation that needed breaking. Barrows had a way of making the ritual of lighting his pipe serve as the curtain that falls on a given scene of a play.

"The Ambassador," Barrows smiled. "He's been tearing his nice white hair since you got back from Havana. You put him on an awful spot, you know."

"It'll do him good, the old bastard. Do you know what Tabio told me about him a few days before he died? He said that he was with Skidmore at a dinner a few days after Germany invaded Russia and that Skidmore said he was glad that now the Russians would get what was coming to them."

"Not really?"

"Lavandero was there. He'll back me up." Hall stopped. "Say, I have an idea," he said. "There's one thing I can do for G-2. I can write a report on Skidmore. I'll do it right after the elections."

"Oh-oh! It'll mean trouble with the Spats Department."

"Spats?"

"State. But you make your report, and give it to me. I'll turn it in with the rest of my stuff when I get back. Why not? You're a civilian. The worst that can happen to you after you write the report is that you'll have trouble getting passports and visas."

"I don't give a damn," Hall said. "And I'll do something else. You gave me an idea. I'm still a civilian, you said. Swell, then I won't be climbing over

anyone's brass hat if I see to it that a copy of the report reaches the White House."

Barrows leaned back in his chair, laughing. "He told me that you threatened to do just that," he said. "But he's just a harmless old duffer, Hall. He told me he wanted to shake your hand."

"He can shove it. Did you meet his daughter?"

"Once. She doesn't like you."

"Ever receive any reports in Miami about her?"

"You know I can't answer that question, Hall."

"O.K. That means—oh, I guess it means that you got reports that she sleeps around plenty. But her political life is more important to G-2 than her sex didoes."

"Gossip?"

"Fact. She's secretly engaged to be married to the man who killed Fielding. The Marques de Runa. But don't worry—he'll never be brought to trial for it. He's in Spain. Left by Clipper over a week ago with his chauffeur, the man who actually ran poor Fielding down."

The officer from Miami laid his pipe down on the desk. "This is pretty serious," he said. "I don't want to get it all by ear, old man. Would you mind talking while it was taken down? Not only about Margaret Skidmore. About everything you can give your Uncle about the Falange? Facts, names, addresses, opinions—the works. I brought a young lieutenant with me from Miami; he was a crack stenographer in civilian life. How about spending a few hours with us?"

"Sure. I can give you the rest of the day, if you like."

"I'd like it fine. But if you don't mind—not here."

"O.K. Dr. Gonzales' house. It's on the outskirts of the city, and we'd be alone."

Hall spent the rest of the day at Gonzales', dictating to the lieutenant. While they worked, Duarte phoned to tell him that Gamburdo had formally conceded the election. "What are your dinner plans?" he asked the Mexican.

"None. I have to finish a long report on the elections before I eat. Where and when are you eating?"

"I don't know. I thought that for sentimental reasons I'd eat with Jerry and Pepe and Vicente and Souza at the Bolivar. Lobo is tied up for the evening."

"I'll join you when I can, Mateo."

Later, when the American officers left, Hall tried to reach his friends by phone. Arturo, the desk clerk, told him that Souza had taken the day off and that Pepe and Vicente had been called up with the reserves. He gave Hall a list of numbers where he might possibly find Pepe. Hall finally reached him at the Transport Workers' Union. "Can you eat with me tonight?" he asked.

"Yes. Where are you? Our officers just handed us our new orders. I am to be your driver and Emilio your guard."

"What?"

"Sergeants Delgado and Vicente at your orders, sir."

"Is this official?"

Pepe laughed heartily. "Official," he said. "We can show you our orders."

"I am at Gonzales'. Can you pick me up now?"

"At once."

The sergeants were there in fifteen minutes. Pepe now drove an Army car whose color matched his uniform. They drove to the University for Jerry.

Soldiers were everywhere, patrolling the city, guarding both the Axis diplomatic buildings and the commercial houses owned by known fascists. The streets were crowded with civilians. They hung around the cafés, listening to the latest election bulletins over the café radios, or they congregated under the government's loud speakers in the plazas and the broad avenues. Even though Gamburdo had already conceded his defeat, the people awaited the results of each new count, cheered each new electoral repudiation of the Falange candidate. Everywhere the sidewalks, the gutters, the doorways of stores and buildings were littered with whole or tattered copies of the leaflets exposing Gamburdo and Ansaldo.

"We gave them a licking they won't forget so quickly," Pepe chortled.

"Yes, but they are still alive, Pepe. They took a licking in the last Spanish elections, too."

"*De nada*," Vicente said, grimly. "Let them try to make a second Spanish War in our Republic. We'll drown them in their own blood."

Jerry was waiting for them on the University steps. "Matt, it was amazing. Translate for me, will you? I think Pepe and Vicente would like to know, too. As soon as the word was flashed to the wards that Lavandero won the election, the serious cases started to pull through, and the others are just about ready to dance. I've never seen anything like it!"

Duarte joined them as they were finishing their soup. He was pale and upset. "The Axis got the news pretty quickly," he said. He picked up a bottle

of brandy, poured a half tumbler and downed it in a gulp.

"For Christ's sake, what happened, Felipe?"

"The Nazis," he said. "This afternoon, a few minutes after Gamburdo quit, a Nazi submarine deliberately sank one of the Republic's unarmed freighters. It happened less than thirty miles from where we're sitting. That isn't all. The ship had time to wireless for help before she sank. And the Nazis waited until the rescue boats had picked up the survivors before they surfaced again and sank each of the boats with their deck guns."

"When did you find out?"

"Hours ago. I kept quiet because I wanted to make sure about Souza. Now it's been confirmed. He was on one of the rescue boats. He is dead."

"Why, the dirty ..."

"Wait, Mateo. There is something else. Don't go. You had a call from Radio City in New York. They want you to broadcast to America at ten o'clock tonight. The Siglo station has the hook-up here."

The clock on the Bolivar dining-room wall read eight-thirty. "I'd better go right over," Hall said. "Eat and wait for me here, Felipe. Don't bother to drive me, Pepe. I'll walk. It's less than two blocks. Have some more brandy."

"I'm going with you," Jerry said.

"*Come in, San Hermano* ..." Over the long-wave from Radio City.

The station announcer gave Hall his signal. Hall mopped his face with his sleeve, glanced at his notes. "For a few hours this afternoon here in San

Hermano," he said into the microphone, "most of us believed that virtue is its own reward, that the truth by itself is the most powerful weapon in the hands of a democracy.

"At three o'clock this afternoon, the fascist candidate for the presidency of this Republic conceded defeat in an election marked by the dramatic revelation of his ties with the Falange in Madrid and the Nazis in Berlin. There was no bloodshed, no disturbances. Democracy had scored a bloodless victory in San Hermano.

"For thirty-five minutes and twelve seconds, the elections remained a triumph for the ideals of the late president, Anibal Tabio, a man in the traditions of our own Abraham Lincoln. It was Tabio's life-long belief that 'Ye shall know the truth and it shall make you free.' But Tabio, like the leaders of the last Spanish Republic, placed too much faith in the power of good and decency and progress and had too little fear of the fascist powers of evil abroad in this world.

"At exactly thirty-five minutes and twelve seconds after the fascist Gamburdo conceded the elections to his Popular-Front opponent, the people of this Republic learned that the world has grown much smaller since Lincoln declared that no nation could exist half slave and half free. Today what Lincoln had to say about one nation goes for one world. This one world, our one world, is now torn by a global war. It is a total war. The people of this democracy struck at the Axis today by overwhelmingly defeating the Axis candidate at the polls. It took the Axis exactly thirty-five minutes and twelve seconds to answer the democratic people of this free nation. The answer was delivered by the torpedoes and deck guns of a Nazi submarine lurking thirty miles from the docks of this port...."

He talked on, glancing at the station clock frequently. There was a lot he wanted to cram into his fifteen minutes. If possible, he hoped, he would be

able to get in a few words about the big feature story on the front page of the bulldog edition of *El Imparcial*.

It was a long and lachrymose account of how Mexico was suffering because the food of the nation was being rushed to the American armed forces and how the war had forced inflation and shortages on that suffering Catholic country whose people had no quarrel with Hitler and no love for the Godless Stalin.

The red sweep-second hand raced Hall through his account of this story. "It is no accident that this piece of Axis propaganda should be featured on page one of the nation's leading pro-Franco paper tomorrow," he said. "This is the Falange line for Latin America. This is the unnecessary acid the Axis is preparing to inject into the very real wounds Latin America is suffering and will suffer from this total war."

The announcer standing at the other microphone drew his hand in front of his own throat. Hall's time was up.

Jerry rushed into the studio from the anteroom, where she had been listening to the talk over the studio radio. She kissed him, took his hand as they went downstairs and into the narrow street which led to the Plaza de la Republica. "Where do we go from here, Matt?" she asked.

"God alone knows. Let's get married tomorrow. That's one thing we'd better do while we still have a chance. I used to think I belonged in the army. The army doctors rejected me for combat service; I'm too banged up. Twice I tried to get into Intelligence, the first time before Pearl Harbor. They wouldn't touch me with a fork. Saturday, Colonel Barrows hinted that they were less squeamish about accepting anti-fascists into G-2. He hinted that maybe I could get an Intelligence commission."

"I'll go in as a nurse if they accept you, Matt."

"That's a big *if*, baby. But if they don't, we can go on fighting the fascists in our own way. We won't get Legion pins and ribbons and bonuses after it's all over, and the only uniforms we'll ever get to wear will be decoy outfits like the one I wore when I left Havana. But the fight will be the same, and the enemy will be the same. And we won't have to worry about getting stuck on an inactive front. We can pick our fronts.

"When it's all over, we'll go to Spain and we'll spit on Franco's grave and I'll show you where a great man named Antin died and where a kid lieutenant named Rafael killed fourteen fascists with one gun and we'll walk down the Puerta del Sol in Madrid with the most wonderful people I've ever known—what's left of them—and we'll dandle black-eyed Spanish kids on our knees until our guts begin to ache for kids of our own and then we'll make a kid of our own and fly back so he'll be born in Ohio like his folks and grow up to be a good anti-fascist President or at least an intelligent American Ambassador to San Hermano. Ah, I'm talking like a fool, baby, talking like a drunk in a swank bar off Sutton Place."

The loud speakers on the lamp posts of the Plaza suddenly came alive.

"Attention, everyone! Attention!"

"Wait," Matt said. "Something's up."

"Attention! This is the Mayor of San Hermano speaking. Eduardo Gamburdo, wanted for the murder of Anibal Tabio, has fled the country. The Cabinet and a quorum of the legislature, meeting at six o'clock tonight, have unanimously voted that President-Elect Esteban Lavandero should be sworn in as President immediately. At ten o'clock tonight, President Lavandero took his oath of office from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in the Presidencia. I will repeat this announcement. Attention...."

Hall translated the announcement. "Now Lavandero has been introduced. I'll translate as he goes along."

"Citizens, members of the Popular Front parties, members of all parties," Lavandero began. "This afternoon, at three thirty-five o'clock, a submarine which has been positively identified as being of German nationality torpedoed a ship bearing the flag of our Republic within our national waters. The ship was sunk. The survivors and the men on the boats which set out from shore to rescue them were shelled by this submarine. The losses have been enormous. At the last official count, we had lost over eighty citizens, all victims of fascist bestiality.

"Tomorrow, I shall go before the Congress and speak for a declaration of war against the Axis. Tonight, my first official act has been to promote Major Diego Segador to the rank of Colonel for outstanding services to our Republic, and to appoint him Emergency Chief of the Defense of San Hermano. I have asked Colonel Segador to speak to you now."

Hall put his arm around Jerry. "The war has come to us," he said. "We don't have to look for it any longer."

"Citizens," Segador said. "Our city is in sight of a wolfpack of Nazi submarines of undetermined size. The lights of our city are therefore at the service of the fascist enemy. If you are on the streets, go into your houses, or into the nearest cafés or other buildings. If you are indoors, put out your lights, wherever you are. In five minutes, the street lights of the city will be turned off. This announcement is being recorded, and will be repeated for the next thirty minutes, or as long as one light remains lit in San Hermano. Our lights are the eyes of the submarines—we must blind their evil eyes.

"Soldiers on duty, remain at your posts and await further orders. Soldiers off duty, report at once to your commanding officer. Sailors off shore ..."

They stood together, watching the people hurry off the streets, watching the lights go out in the lamp posts, in the cafés, in the houses of the old Plaza. They remained near the loud speaker, listening to the announcement repeated, listening to the national anthem, listening, finally, to the dark silences of the night. They remained frozen to the cobbles of the Plaza de la Republica which had been born in the days of the empire as the Plaza de Fernando e Isabel and whose cobbles bore the shadows of the edifices of the Conquistador generations and the Segura generations and the democratic decade. Monuments of all manners of life rose in dark, brooding piles on all sides of the Plaza; the slave life and the life that was half slave and half free and the free life which now had to fight for its freedom. In the dark Plaza, they could almost hear the young heart of the city, of the Republic, beating slowly, steadily, confidently.

"Darling," she said, "I'm not afraid of anything any more. I'll never be afraid again."

"I know," he answered. "That's what this war is about, baby. It's the war of the people who are not afraid to live their own lives. Let's go back to the Bolivar, baby. Pepe and Vicente are still expecting us."

Pepe and Vicente were sitting in their lorry, waiting for them.

"*Compañeros,*" Pepe said, "Duarte is waiting for you inside. You will all have to stay at the hotel tonight."

"That's all right, Pepe."

"We have to go back to our barracks," Vicente said. "We are called."

"Yes, *compañeros,*" Pepe said. His uniform looked less strange on him in the blackout. "We cracked the thick skull of the Falange today, *compañeros*, but the black heart is still pumping."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FIVE ARROWS ***

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