

Tales of San Felipe

A Life and Times Memoir

By J. Jeremiah Jefferson III

As told to Dr. Fraser M. Livingston

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Tales of San Felipe

“Not many people believe they can live their dreams. I’m here to say you can.”

J. Jeremiah Jefferson III – or J3 as you’ll come to know him – proves his point in, “Tales of San Felipe.” This amazing life-and-times memoir takes you on a Caribbean odyssey spanning more than five decades and intersecting with some of the region’s most fascinating – and notorious – historical characters, including Fidel Castro, the Duvaliers, Che Guevara, and assorted presidents of Mexico and the United States. (Turns out J3 was on pretty close terms with Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson!)

Thanks to a combination of chance and curiosity, anthropologist Fraser M. Livingston makes the discovery of a lifetime when he finds his way to the Caribbean island paradise of San Felipe. There he meets and interviews the legendary J3, who not only shares the story of his own mercurial career, but explains the mysterious history of San Felipe.

Told in the inimitable first-person voice of J3, “Tales of San Felipe” recounts a lifetime of adventure, humor, danger, love, triumph and tragedy. J3 takes you to a face-to-face showdown with Baby Doc Duvalier, a tense negotiation with Castro and Che Guevara, a brutal confrontation in a Honduran banana field and a narrow escape from danger in a Guatemalan jail. He also tells stories about his pals, roguish Alfonso Sanchez (the purported “inventor” of guacamole dip!), wily Don Padrone, tough-as-nails Mike Castle and the avuncular Texan Charlie Grutwilder; and he shares the touching tale of his story-book romance and marriage to the wise and beautiful Rosalia Gatos.

As J3 himself might put it, “When I say you’ll enjoy this book, I know what I’m talking about.”



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Table of Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	5
Introduction, Part One – Paradise Rumored	6
Introduction, Part Two – Paradise Found	11
Chapter One – I Wasn’t Always J3	19
Chapter Two – Living the Dream	26
Chapter Three – Alfonso	38
Chapter Four – Caribe’s	44
Chapter Five – Guatemala	50
Chapter Six – The First Mrs. J	57
Chapter Seven – Che	63
Chapter Eight – The Last Mrs. J	68
Chapter Nine – Passages	78
Chapter Ten – Haiti	84
Chapter Eleven – Jack	89
Footnotes	93

Foreword

What you are about to read is the product of five interviews I conducted with Mr. J. Jeremiah Jefferson III at his home in Pitts Key, San Felipe, during the period of February 7 through 18, 1986. With the exception of a two-part introduction, the words are all Mr. Jefferson's, which I recorded with his permission. As an academic, my role was limited to verifying the accuracy of dates, names and statistics contained in Mr. Jefferson's reflections. In the few instances when his prodigious memory was inaccurate, usually regarding exact dates, I have noted those discrepancies. I also have noted several historical facts in an effort to clarify events for the reader.

I beg your indulgence of my rather lengthy two-part introduction, but I believe it is required to provide an understanding of the chain of events that led me to conduct these remarkable interviews.

At the time of the interviews, Mr. Jefferson was 78 years old. His motive for granting these interviews was to place into the academic and public record information concerning various events of which he had personal knowledge. He believed historians would find his recollections valuable in clarifying several major historical events.

Mr. Jefferson asked me to delay the publication of this document until his death, which unfortunately occurred November 16, 2007, when he was killed in a tragic parasailing accident while celebrating his 100th birthday at his beloved Pitts Key.

The only restriction Mr. Jefferson imposed, and to which I readily agreed, was that I verify all names and facts, and report faithfully and honestly his recollections. That I have done.

Up until his untimely death, Mr. Jefferson pursued a vigorous life of adventure, and retained one of the most extraordinary memories I have ever encountered during a long academic career. I was honored to call him my friend.

In light of my own advancing years, I have entrusted the copyright of this memoir to the executor of my estate and curator of my library, Mark D. Smith.

The Library of Congress and the United States Trademark and Copyright Office classify this as a work of fiction. I leave it to you, the reader, to decide.

Dr. Fraser M. Livingston

April 1, 2008
Santa Barbara, California

Introduction

* * * *

Part One: Paradise Rumored

For years I had heard there existed in the Caribbean an island unclaimed by any country. The notion was, of course, totally fanciful.

Every few years the newspapers report on the fantasies of adventurers who plan on starting their own countries. As a social and political anthropologist by training and inclination, I can tell you their fantasies never become reality. Indeed, virtually every square inch of the world's land area falls under the administrative authority of at least one sovereign nation. This includes islands and atolls, populated or not. Yet people continue to believe that with gumption and grit they can form their own countries.

In truth it doesn't happen. At every attempt, government authorities have intervened, often on a multi-national basis. The rumors persisted, though, of an isolated, unmapped, autonomous island, unclaimed by any nation – in essence, a tiny country without a government, a modern day Wautauga Association⁽¹⁾. It was too preposterous to contemplate, let alone investigate.

I first heard the rumor in 1954 during my junior year at Michigan State University as I was deciding on social and political anthropology as my life's calling. It surfaced again in 1958 while I was pursuing my master's degree, and again in 1959 and 1961 when I was an instructor at Pennsylvania State University working on my doctorate.

The rumor was always the same – a tiny Caribbean island, self-sufficient and independent, unclaimed by any established government, and functioning peacefully as an anarchy (by which I mean an anarchy in the academic sense; that is, a society without rulers, not without rules).

I always wrote it off as a myth on equal footing with the giant alligators of the New York sewer system and the Abominable Snowmen of the Himalayas. I'm an academician, a logical man, someone not easily fooled or hoaxed. I have spent a long academic career studying myths and debunking them. I was, however, sufficiently intrigued in 1961 to check every available map – official or not – to satisfy myself that every island in the Caribbean, every atoll, every speck of land could be verified as a sovereign nation, a colony, a territory, a possession or at least a claim of an existing government. I pored over hundreds of maps – current and historical – to put this myth to rest. The answer seemed conclusive. All lands were present, all were accounted for.

People want so desperately to believe such a myth. Or so I thought until 1985, when my wife and I were celebrating my 50th birthday in Paris. Ordinarily, I'm a very frugal man, which has served me well over the years, allowing for a comfortable, but certainly not flashy, lifestyle. Genteel with a small "g" as my wife has always put it. But, given the special occasion, we decided to splurge. As faith and providence would have it, that decision changed my life.

Instead of the modest Left Bank establishments I usually choose, Helen and I threw all caution to the wind, along with common sense and my checkbook, and decided to stay at the famous – and frightfully expensive – Hotel Bristol.

The Bristol seemed populated by men wearing bespoke-tailored suits that cost more than my 1978 Chevrolet Malibu, and sleek women who spent more at the Chanel boutique in a day than many people spend on a house. On my birthday, September 12, we wandered into the hotel's bar for a pre-dinner drink. It was crowded with its usual cast of rich and powerful characters. Just as we arrived a couple was rising from one of the small tables for two along the wall and we hurriedly made our way through the crowd to claim it. Helen and I aren't much at small talk, particularly in situations like

this; so over the years, we've developed a habit of sipping our drinks and listening in on the chit-chat of our neighbors.

As we settled into our seats, I noticed to my right a middle-aged gentleman with a lady substantially younger than he. Their conversation was animated and intense, but they were speaking Italian, which I didn't understand. However, on my left were three gentlemen of obvious means who, from the sounds of their voices, had been enjoying their libations for the better part of the afternoon.

"I'm telling you, J3 has this job completely in hand," said the Armani blazer with an upper crust New England accent. "He has the company's⁽²⁾ complete support. We won't let him fail."

"That is all you've been telling us for weeks," sighed Mr. Solid Gold Cufflinks in French-accented English. "Walter, when are you leaving for San Felipe?" he quizzed the third man, attired in a gaudy Turnbull & Asser blue-striped shirt with contrasting white collar and French cuffs.

"In the next week or so," the shirt replied with a British accent. "Actually, I'm quite eager to get back to San Felipe. It's been several years since I was last there. Such a gorgeous island. And, of course, J3 does set an extraordinary table."

"That he does," agreed the Armani blazer. "It is a truly extraordinary place, isn't it?"

"*Mais oui,*" shrugged the Frenchman. "Truly *enchantez* in more ways than one. Well, Walter, a *bon voyage* to the Isle of San Felipe, and I look forward to receiving your report. Don't forget – be certain our friends in Port au Prince are taken care of."

"Don't we always take care of the D.S.T.'s⁽³⁾ friends?" asked Walter with a look on his face that was frankly menacing.

"That is what worries me, Walter. That is what worries me."

"Where the hell is the check?" boomed the Armani blazer. A waiter suddenly appeared, handing the American a bill, which he signed with a flourish and, from the look on the waiter's face, appended a generous tip. The three men rose and, as they were squeezing out of the cramped lounge, the last thing I heard was the American say, "Walter, I do envy your trip to the Caribbean. Give my regards to J3."

My head was spinning. As I told you, in 1961 I had gone over every map of the Caribbean I could find. Nowhere did I recall seeing an island named San Felipe. Not even a sandbar. But I couldn't have been mistaken. They definitely said San Felipe and the Caribbean. And they most definitely referred to San Felipe as an island. I know of a few towns called San Felipe, but no island. Surely that's what they must have meant. Otherwise, it made no sense.

It's always interesting listening in on other people's conversations, but this one had me confused.

I awakened September 13, 1985, officially 50 years old, closer to the end than the beginning, and still intrigued by the conversation I had overheard. Try as I might, I couldn't get it out of my head.

On several occasions I'd been a guest lecturer at the Sorbonne. So that morning as Helen spent a few hours (and god knows how many francs) shopping, I decided to visit my old friend, Dr. Herman Atley. He was a Brit who had relocated to Paris shortly after the war and still taught infrequently at the Sorbonne. His life was devoted to the science of cartography – the study of maps and map-making. Not very glamorous by the standards of the Bristol Hotel crowd, but it's one of those arcane, specialized sciences that helps make the world go 'round. I phoned him to ask if I could visit. It had been several years since our last contact, but I well remembered his jewel-like apartment on the Ile de Saint Louis. Now comfortably ensconced in his 70s, the good doctor was delighted to see me.

“Dear boy, come in. Do come in. What a pleasant surprise! I wish you’d given me more notice so I could receive you properly.”

After exchanging pleasantries and chit-chat, I got down to business.

“Herman, as you know I thoroughly studied the Caribbean in 1961 from a cartographer’s point of view. So I consider myself somewhat of an expert on at least the names and locations of the islands in the region. For the love of me, I can not remember coming across an island called San Felipe. Do you ever recall seeing or hearing mention of such a place?”

Atley’s eyes narrowed as he looked at me. “And why would you want to know that, dear boy? Why would you care if there’s an island called San Felipe? It’s a quarter century since you did your research. What possible interest could you have now?”

I told him about the conversation I’d overheard at the bar in the Bristol, and as I spoke I could see the color slowly but surely draining from his face.

“You honestly believe the Frenchman was D.S.T.?”

“Yes,” I replied. “And I think the American was C.I.A. God knows what the Englishman was.”

“My boy, that’s totally preposterous. Obviously a case of some drunkards attempting to impress each other.”

“I don’t think so, not from the look of it and not from the tone of their voices.” I noticed the color had yet to return to Atley’s face.

“See here, Fraser,” he barked. “Assuming these men were who you think they were, they are highly trained professionals. They know better than to get drunk in a bar and tell stories out of school. No, my boy, I suspect you’re the victim of an elaborate hoax, perpetrated by a few clever investment bankers who detected you eavesdropping on them. Because you see, dear Fraser, San Felipe does not exist.” He averted looking me in the eye as he spoke.

After a few more minutes of small talk about academic matters, I bid Atley farewell and decided to stroll back to the Bristol Hotel for lunch with Helen. What I didn’t know – but learned eventually – was that almost immediately upon my departure from his apartment, Atley had picked up his telephone, dialed four numbers and the pound sign, got another dial tone and dialed five more numbers. There was one ring. At the other end, a flat nasal voice said simply, “Yes?”

“We may have a problem.”

As I walked back into the Bristol, I was still pondering the conversation I had overheard and the conversation I’d just had. Something continued to trouble me, so I did something I’d never done before in my life – I engaged the services of a world-class concierge.

“May I help you, sir?” asked the officious little Frenchman standing behind the concierge’s desk.

“Yes, I hope so. My name is Dr. Livingston, and I’m a guest here at the hotel.”

“Yes, of course, Dr. Livingston. How might I be of service to you?”

“Well, my wife and I are interested in taking a Caribbean vacation this coming November to celebrate our wedding anniversary. I was hoping you could help me make a reservation for a week on San Felipe Island. We’d want to travel first class, of course, and stay at the best hotel,” I lied.

“I take it you’ve not been there before, Dr. Livingston.”

“No. No. I’ve just heard that it’s a beautiful place with, uh, excellent food.”

“Very good, sir, leave everything to me. Do you have dates in mind?”

“Yes, the 17th through the 24th. You see, our anniversary is the 17th.”

“Very good, Dr. Livingston. I’m sure we can make satisfactory arrangements. I will call your room as soon as I know something. I assume money will not be an issue,” he noted with charming condescension.

“Oh, no. Of course not.”

About an hour later, the phone rang in my room. It was the concierge.

“Excuse me, doctor. You did say San Felipe, S-A-N-F-E-L-I-P-E, did you not?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Oh, sir, I am afraid there is no island named San Felipe in the Caribbean.”

“Are you certain?”

“Positively, Dr. Livingston. I have contacted nearly every airline and travel agency in Paris, and I must report there is no San Felipe.”

“I see.”

“May I suggest St. Bart’s? It being French, we have excellent relations with all the better hotels there, and I am certain we can arrange superb accommodations for you.”

“No, no. Let me think about it. But thanks very much for your help.”

I hung up the phone. Another dead end. Maybe Herman Atley was right. Maybe it was just an elaborate hoax.

The mystery of San Felipe might have rested there if it hadn’t been for another extraordinary coincidence. Since my return from Paris, I hadn’t thought much of San Felipe. I did go back to check all the maps at the University of Michigan library, where I was now a professor of cultural and political anthropology. Again, they turned up nothing.

I’d almost completely forgotten about San Felipe when on December 6, 1985, I was attending a conference at McGill University in Montreal. Seated next to me during lunch at the round table of eight was a very well-tanned Canadian whose name tag identified him as John Hudson, professor of anthropology at McGill.

Hudson was one of those aggressively outgoing types one must suffer at every conference. After introducing himself around the table, he proceeded to solicit everyone’s opinions on the conference, inquire into their backgrounds, and so forth and so on, *ad nauseum*. If you’ve ever been to a conference, and particularly an academic one, you know the type. Totally insufferable. Yet he did have a splendid tan, and this was December in Montreal; so one of my colleagues asked him where he’d gotten such a fantastic tan.

“Oh,” grinned Hudson, “I’ve just returned from two weeks in Cuba. We had an extraordinary time. Seems that old Fidel has decided tourism isn’t such a bad idea after all. We had a grand time. Too bad you Americans can’t visit Cuba⁽⁴⁾. Believe me, it’s going to be the tourist wave of the future. Sun, beautiful beaches, interesting things to do and see, and it’s dirt cheap.

“Yes, good thing for us Canadians we don’t recognize your embargo,” he said, looking at me and chuckling. “Really. If you get the opportunity, you must go. Quite extraordinary. And quite cheap.”

“What about shopping?” whined an overweight, goateed professor of market research and demographics from Brandeis, who had introduced himself as Caspar (“Call me Cap.”) Richlan. “My wife likes to shop and she only likes duty-free stores when we’re in the Caribbean. That’s why we always go to St. Thomas. Best selections and best prices, she says.”

“Well, shopping is a bit of a problem,” replied Hudson. “You see there really isn’t anything to buy other than some very modest native handicrafts in Cuba, but the problem is easily solved, easily solved, and quite cheaply.

“As part of our tour package, we took a day trip to a small island that’s just a short hop from Cuba. In fact, I assume it’s owned by Cuba. The only way to get there is from Havana. It’s called San Felipe.⁽⁵⁾”

I nearly choked on my croissant at the mention of the name.

“It’s quite a beautiful place, by the way, and the shops there are stocked with every imaginable thing you could want. And as long as you’re going to take it back home with you, the Cubans don’t care. Just make sure you take it home, and don’t try to sell it in Cuba,” he warned.

By now my stomach was filled with butterflies. “You have actually been to San Felipe?” I asked impatiently.

“Oh, yes. Yes, of course.”

“How did you get there?”

“Well, it’s quite simple, really. There’s a daily seaplane flight that leaves Havana in the morning and returns in the afternoon from San Felipe. Taking a day trip is really quite easy. You see, they have to use a seaplane,” he added, “because there is no airport in San Felipe. It’s far too small and too mountainous, but they have daily seaplane flights right out of the harbor in Havana to San Felipe. It’s about an hour and three-quarters each way.”

“And who runs these flights?” I demanded.

“Oh, I don’t know. Some little private airline – Caribbean Traditions, something like that. They run scheduled flights to several of the islands, mostly tourists on day trips. It was quite nice.”

“San Felipe. Tell me about it.”

“What’s to tell? It’s a very small island. Very beautiful. Excellent food. Besides the duty-free shopping and a few hotels, it’s not all that developed. Although there are some interesting restaurants and bars. We had a most extraordinary meal at the hotel owned by the same people who run the seaplane company.”

“I have to visit San Felipe,” I declared.

“Well, I assume the only way to get there is from Cuba. And you can’t go to Cuba. You’re an American. Maybe you could pass yourself off as a Canadian,” he laughed.

“When you left Havana, which direction did you fly?”

“Can’t really recall,” Hudson offered.

“North? South? East? West? Think, man. Which way did you fly?”

“Sorry, old boy. I have no idea.”

“Did they give you a map?”

“Oh, no. We were met at the dock with information on local merchants, but beyond that, no – I just don’t know. Oh, my goodness, look at the time. Well, gentlemen, colleagues, shall we return to the festivities?”

And he was gone. I sat there, my head reeling. By god, this gasbag had actually been to San Felipe. It did exist! And quite obviously it was not easily accessible. My instincts from Paris had been right all along. Now all I needed was to get to Cuba.

Introduction

* * * *

Part Two: Paradise Found

Despite the best efforts of the United States, getting to Cuba was relatively simple and painless. Indeed, even though it is illegal for U.S. citizens to visit Cuba and there are no direct commercial flights from the United States, thousands of Americans visit Cuba every year. How many thousands no one really knows. For obvious reasons, the Cuban government doesn't publish statistics. For equally obvious reasons, the Cuban government doesn't bother to stamp American passports, so there is no risk of having a Cuban immigration stamp turn up in a U.S. passport.

My preferred route was an easy one. On January 28, 1986, I flew to Mexico City, took a cab to the modest Hotel Bristol in the Zona Rosa, and after securing a room, walked across the street to a travel agent where I purchased a ticket with an open return from Mexico City to Havana the next day on Air Cuba⁽¹⁾. Naturally, I paid for the ticket in cash.

The next morning, I returned to the Mexico City airport and showed the gate agent my ticket. Although I had a U.S. passport, no one lifted an eye. An hour later we were airborne, heading toward Havana. The plane was an old Russian jetliner that could only be described as having seen better days. Despite that nuisance, the three-hour flight was calm, the rum flowed freely and everyone seemed to be in the best of spirits.

From the looks of it, I wasn't the only American on board, but given our destination, I felt the prudent thing to do was simply stay in my seat and not engage anyone else in conversation. The other four or five Americans on the flight appeared to feel the same way. I must confess a great deal of trepidation when we arrived in Havana. There was no jetway, and as we walked across the tarmac to the main terminal I started thinking to myself that I may have made the mistake of a lifetime. I've never knowingly violated any law, and yet here I was going out of my way not only to violate a federal law, but commit what some might argue was even an act of treason.

I was in too far now to turn around. I handed my passport to the unsmiling man in uniform standing behind the passport control desk. Through narrow eyes, he flipped it open, looking at the other stamps. My heart was racing and the sweat was starting to flow, not just from the tropical heat. Suddenly he snapped the passport closed, handed it to me, stamped my entry visa on a separate piece of paper, and said, "You must keep this paper with your passport at all times."⁽²⁾ Then he smiled in that warm way only the Cubans can and said, "Welcome to Cuba, Mr. Livingston."

I quickly made my way through customs inspection, which was cursory, and before I knew it I was standing out in front of Jose Marti Airport having my bag loaded into a 1956 Chevrolet for the short trip to the Hotel Nacional. The Nacional had once been a grand and glorious hotel that was the center of Batista Cuba. It must have been something to see in its day. Now it looked more like an elegant flophouse than a grand hotel, but the people were friendly and pleasant, and I had no trouble securing a room, since I was paying in U.S. dollars. After unpacking, I wandered down to the tour desk in the immense lobby. An efficient and pleasant young lady greeted me in excellent English.

"Excuse me, I was wondering if you might be able to help me," I inquired with some discomfort.

"Certainly, sir."

"While I'm visiting Cuba, I was hoping to visit San Felipe."

"Of course, sir."

"Can I arrange that through you?"

“Of course. There are flights every morning at eight from the old Pan Am seaplane terminal on the waterfront. The flights arrive in San Felipe at 9:45 and return at four in the afternoon, arriving back in Havana at 5:45. It’s a very enjoyable day trip.”

“Well, uh, yes, I realize that. But I’m wondering if I could make a reservation with an open return, in case I decide to spend a night or two in San Felipe.”

“With pleasure, sir. When do you wish to depart?”

“As soon as possible, please. Whenever there’s an available seat.”

“One moment please, sir.” She reached for the telephone and in rapid fire Spanish arranged my passage. She looked at me and said, “February 2 is the first available opening. Would that be convenient for you?”

“Yes, it would.”

“Very good, Dr. Livingston. I will confirm your reservation and have your tickets delivered to your room later today.”

“Excellent. Thank you very much. By the way, what’s the name of the airline that flies to San Felipe?”

“Why, sir, it’s Caribbean Traders.”

The days leading up to my departure were a blur. I tried to blend in and pretend to be a tourist interested in all things Cuban. I’m sure I came up short. I visited a cigar factory, sampled the local rum, and went to a museum extolling the virtues of the Cuban Revolution. But my heart wasn’t in it. I was anxious about getting to San Felipe. I had to see the place and know it actually existed.

I awoke well before dawn on February 2, too excited to sleep. By 7 o’clock I’d checked out of the hotel and was on my way to the dock. Tied up at the end of the pier was a Grumman seaplane. Inside the modest little terminal was a sign in several languages announcing that all passengers had to check in before boarding. Standing behind the counter was a pleasant chap who looked at my ticket and said, “Dr. Livingston, I see you have an open return.”

“Yes,” I said. “Is that a problem?”

“No, not at all. You must remember, though, under the rules you have to return directly to Cuba from San Felipe. You can’t go elsewhere.”

“I understand. I’m just planning to spend a little time in San Felipe.”

“Very good,” he said, handing me a boarding pass. “Please enjoy the flight. We’re on schedule and should arrive on time at 9:45.”

The flight was filled. There were some Canadian couples day-tripping over to San Felipe for shopping, a Cuban soldier dressed in fatigues and wearing a beard, two men in white suits who appeared to be British, and a few others of indeterminate origin. The flight was smooth and pleasant. The Canadians obviously were enjoying themselves and taking advantage of the free rum punch. I had strong Cuban coffee and ate one of the pastries I found in the little bag that each of us had received before boarding. I don’t suppose you could expect full meal service on a seaplane.

I spent most of the flight looking out the window at the calm Caribbean Sea and wondering just what mystery San Felipe held. And then at about 9:30 as I looked out the window, I saw it – a lush, green island with high peaks running through the middle and a narrow flat strip of land around the circumference. The pilot flew over San Felipe Bay, adjusting for the landing, and I could pick out the small settlement on the bay that appeared to be the main town. He expertly landed the plane, cruised across the bay, and before I knew it we were tied up alongside the pier.

“My god, I’m actually here,” I thought. “What is all the mystery about?”

As we disembarked, people hurriedly made their way down the pier where several old jeeps waited. Each one was painted red and on the side said Nunzio's Jitney Service. I held back, however, stopping to drink in the view that was before me. It was a picture perfect Caribbean village, all palm trees and pastels. Neat and tidy and affluent in an understated Caribbean way. Behind me stretched a bay, roughly a mile on each side and flanked on two sides by towering green mountains. In the hills were modest homes, also in pastel or white, and at the far left end of the bay appeared to be a small resort.

"Most interesting," I thought, as I turned and walked to the end of the dock where only one cab now waited. The driver asked me if I needed a ride.

"No, not right now. Thanks. I'll tell you what, though. I could do with something to eat. I've been up most of the night, and I'm suddenly famished."

"No problem," he said, squinting into the tropical sun. "There's your place." He pointed to what looked like a rather large establishment about 50 yards away with a sign that said Alfonso's Beach Shack.

I thanked him and started down the street, taking in the various shops, their windows bursting with all manner of products – leather goods, cameras, watches, calculators, apparel of all kinds. One store even advertised Brioni clothes. John Hudson was right. It looked like you could buy just about anything here, and I'd only seen a small portion of the town.

I lugged my carry-on into Alfonso's and, as I was standing there letting my eyes adjust, a tall Latin-looking man with slicked-back gray hair and a gray Guards mustache approached me.

"*Bienvenidos*," he smiled brightly.

"Excuse me?"

"Ah, an American! Welcome! Welcome, my friend. You look as if you might like to cool off."

"Well, yes, I guess I could. I'm not really used to traveling in the tropics, and lugging this carry-on bag is probably not a bright idea."

"No problem, no problem at all, *senor. Por favor.*" And he directed me to a table. "Your waitress will be here in a minute. In the meantime, can I get you something to drink? Juice? A soft drink? A beer? A rum punch? A sloe gin fizz always goes well at this time of day."

"I'd like a pineapple juice, if you have it."

"But of course. With pleasure, *senor.*"

And off he went. I looked around Alfonso's. It seemed prosperous and well-run. Red tile floors, white stucco walls, ceiling fans turning lazily overhead and green tropical plants everywhere. Unlike a lot of Caribbean bars, it was as clean as could be. And relatively crowded for such an early hour. At the back of the room a gigantic mahogany bar ran almost the length of the wall, where a dozen people, most of whom appeared to be locals, were gathered. Some were engaged in conversation. Some were reading the newspaper. One man stared intently at the CNN News playing on the television behind the bar. Some were having coffee and some were drinking beer. One red-faced Irish chap who looked like he desperately needed it was nursing a gigantic Bloody Mary. All in all a pleasant place. Just then a young, attractive brunette, dressed in shorts and a golf shirt with Alfonso's Beach Shack embroidered on it, approached the table.

"Do you need a menu, sir?"

"Yes, please. I'm very hungry. Are you still serving breakfast?"

"Anything you wish, sir. This is Alfonso's."

I ordered some bacon and eggs.

"Your breakfast will be ready in a few minutes," she advised. "In the meantime, would you care for a newspaper?"

"Sure. Why not?" It never hurts to read the local papers in strange little towns and find out what's going on. But when she returned, she presented me a New York Times, a Wall Street Journal,

a Financial Times and a USA Today. Remarkably, each one had February 2, 1986, as its date of publication.

“I’m sorry we’re out of the Miami Herald right now. For some reason, we didn’t get our full shipment this morning.”

“That’s all right,” I said thoughtfully. “I have more than enough to occupy me.”

For those who have traveled in the Caribbean and have tried to find a newspaper, you know what an extraordinary accomplishment this was. Here in the middle of the Caribbean Sea was a selection of newspapers you might not find in every large American city. This really was an amazing place. I had finished my breakfast and was wondering what I should do next when the man who had greeted me came back to the table.

“Is there anything else we can get for you, *senor*? Some more juice? Perhaps some coffee?”

“No. No, thank you. I’m quite fine really.”

“Will you be staying in San Felipe very long?” he inquired.

“Well, I-I don’t know. I’d heard of San Felipe and decided to visit, but frankly I haven’t made any arrangements. So I don’t know what I’m going to do or how long I’m going to be here. Perhaps you could recommend a hotel. I hadn’t even thought that far in advance.”

“Well, certainly the most comfortable place in town is the Caribbean Traders Beach Club. It’s just around the bend on the bay, just a little over a mile from here. I think you’ll find it a pleasant place.”

“Great. I wonder if they have any rooms available.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll be delighted to call them and tell them you’re coming. I’m sure there will be no problem. One of Nunzio’s jitneys should be out front, and they can take you right over.”

“Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate it.”

“No. No. The pleasure is all mine. Excuse me. I’ll call and tell them you’re on your way.”

I reached into my pocket for some money to pay for the bill, and as I was getting ready to walk out, my congenial host walked over to me.

“Everything’s fine. They are expecting you at the beach club. You’ll have no problem, and a jitney is out in front waiting to take you.”

“Hey, thanks again. You’re too kind.”

“No. No. My pleasure. Enjoy your stay, Dr. Livingston.”

It wasn’t until I was seated in the jitney that two thoughts occurred to me simultaneously. The first was, I had never told anyone my name, and the second was that I had simply wandered into town off the dock. There was no passport control, no immigration, no customs, no forms to fill out. Nothing. “Well,” I thought, “it’s a small town and I’m sure they probably know the name of every tourist who gets off the seaplane.”

By now, we’d arrived at the entrance to the Caribbean Traders Beach Club. As the car came to a halt, a severe looking man dressed in white slacks and a colorful tropical shirt approached.

“Dr. Livingston, *wilkommen*. I am Manford Schmidt, general manager of the resort. Please allow me to escort you to your room. I hope you’ll find it comfortable.”

“Well, shouldn’t I check in first or something?”

“No bother. We can attend to that later. I’m sure you are eager to settle in and unpack after your journey.”

As we walked down the cobblestone path surrounded by a profusion of tropical plants and flowers, Schmidt extolled the wonders of his resort. It was quite impressive. A French chef, a 12,000 bottle wine cellar, its own bakery, 24-hour-a-day butler service, a concierge fluent in six

languages, satellite television, everything you could think of, up to and including a full time horticulturist.

He opened the door to a large, pleasantly furnished room. I took a quick look around. The huge bathroom was stocked with Guerlain toiletries, and featured a sunken marble tub and separate glass shower. The room had a comfortable sitting area with fresh flowers on the coffee table and an enormous king-sized bed. Best of all, one wall was comprised entirely of French doors that opened onto a patio and a spectacular view of the Caribbean Sea. Miraculously, my bag had already arrived. On a small side table, a bottle of Taittinger champagne was chilling.

"I hope everything is satisfactory," said Schmidt. "And if you need anything, anything at all, please don't hesitate to contact me personally."

After Schmidt left, I suddenly felt very tired. It had been a long couple of days. I decided to take a hot shower and treat myself to a long nap.

When I awoke the sun was just starting to go down. I stood on my terrace, sipping the Taittinger, looking at one of those brilliant Caribbean sunsets when the sun looks like it's literally setting into the sea, then is rapidly gone. "Well," thought I, "time to look around and get a proper meal, and tomorrow I'll get started on discovering the secret of San Felipe." I thought I would repair to the lobby, check in and treat myself to what Schmidt had assured me would be a first-class experience in the hotel's dining room.

I strolled over to the main entrance and walked into the lobby. It was then that I saw them. Hundreds of them.

Like many hotels, the Caribbean Traders Beach Club had pictures of famous guests who had stayed there. But unlike other hotels, literally hundreds of photographs of the rich, famous and infamous decorated the walls. "Awfully tacky for such an elegant place," I reflected.

I wandered over to look at some of them and see their inscriptions. I was about to learn the secret of San Felipe, although I didn't realize it at the moment.

Of the hundreds of photos, the first one I saw brought me up short. A picture of Marilyn Monroe in the hotel lobby with a dazzling smile. The inscription read, "J3, Happy birthday to you. Jack and I had a wonderful time." Next to it was a picture of a short, disagreeable looking man and it said, "To my friend, J3. Phyllis and I had a great time. Sam. P.S. Next time you're in Chicago, I'll take you to the Rosebud."⁽³⁾

A photo of Frank Sinatra with his arm around a thin rangy looking man with thinning white hair bore this inscription: "J3, how's your bird? Frank."

A head shot of President Kennedy: "J3, thanks for the cigars. Your pal, Jack."

The same gray haired man standing between the Prince of Wales and Princess Di with an inscription that read, "Dear J3, Thank you so much for such a gracious time." It was signed Charles and Di, with a P.S. "Mother wants to know why you haven't visited lately."

There were pictures of this J3 with Eisenhower, Truman, Jimmy Carter, Winston Churchill, Malcolm X, Louis Armstrong, Michael Manley, Batista, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Junior, Joey Bishop, Peter Lawford, Malcolm Forbes, Henry Kissinger, Duke Ellington, Wayne Newton, David Rockefeller, Nelson Rockefeller, Lawrence Rockefeller.

A picture of him with Ronald Reagan was signed, "J3, thanks for the good advice on Grenada. Ron."

More photographs of this mysterious J3 with Noel Coward, George S. Kaufman, Joe Louis, Scotty Reston, John Ford, Cab Calloway, Lee Iaccoca, Donald Trump and Ivana. Castro, Tito, Earl Long, Russell Long, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Willy Brandt, Johnny Carson, Jackie Robinson,

Thomas Watson Jr., William Paley, Edward R. Murrow (“J3, thanks for the info on Tail Gunner Joe. Best regards, Ed.”).⁽⁴⁾

It didn’t stop. It just went on and on. More pictures. Ella Fitzgerald, Alfred Hitchcock, John Huston, Satchell Paige, Frank Lloyd Wright, Andrew Wyeth, Pablo Picasso, Robert Frost, Aaron Copland, Cole Porter, dozens of photographs of what appeared to be Latin American and Caribbean heads of state whom I didn’t recognize. And each and every one of them was signed with a warm and personal message to the inscrutable J3.

“All that’s missing is a photo of the pope,” I thought to myself, and then I found the photographs of not one but three popes, and citations making this J3 an honorary Knight of Columbus and an honorary Knight of Malta. “Who is this man?” I asked myself. Obviously, this is the J3 my friends at the Bristol Hotel in Paris had mentioned in that conversation I’d overheard what now seemed a century ago.

“Enjoying our gallery?” Manfred Schmidt inquired.

“Yes, it’s quite amazing.”

“It certainly is,” he allowed. “You see, Mr. Jefferson has friends everywhere. Have you seen the Russian photos?”

We walked over to another wall and there were photographs of Stalin, Kruschev, Brezhnev and other severe men, some wearing Russian fur hats, but also a picture of George F. Kennan with J3 and the inscription, “Dear J3, you were right. It was a long telegram! Signed ‘X’.”⁽⁵⁾

“Who is J3?” I asked Schmidt. “This is either an elaborate hoax, or this fellow is on intimate terms with the world’s ‘Who’s Who.’ What’s the story?”

“No story, Dr. Livingston. Mr. Jefferson just enjoys the company of interesting people,” Schmidt offered. “Do you care for a drink?”

“Yes. Yes, I think I’d better.”

“Good. Why don’t we have a drink in the piano bar? You’ll enjoy listening to Mr. Jefferson’s latest musical discovery, a young American pianist named Jeff LaDeur. While we’re at it, perhaps I can answer some of the more obvious questions you may have.”

“We’ve been expecting you for some time, doctor,” Schmidt revealed, sipping a martini. “Ever since your visit to Dr. Atley, we wondered when you would arrive.”

“How did you know about Atley?”

“Why, doctor, I’m surprised at you. We make it our business to know such things. You see, Mr. Jefferson is most interested in meeting you.”

“That’s the man known as J3?” I countered.

“Quite right, and quite a remarkable man. For awhile now, he has been looking for an academic to whom he can tell his story. You see, Mr. Jefferson is 78 years old, and he’d like to get a few things on the record. He believes you may be just the man to help him do that.”

“How did you know I’d come here?”

“Well, actually we didn’t. After you unfortunately overheard a conversation among several drunken operatives at the Bristol, Atley phoned us and said he thought you might visit us. Academic curiosity and all that. But when time passed and you made no arrangements to come here, we decided to have Dr. Hudson provide you with some alluring bait. Mr. Jefferson was certain you would find it irresistible.”

“Hudson works for you?”

“Well, yes. He’s a buffoon, but he’s our buffoon. And it takes all manner of people to make certain San Felipe and Mr. Jefferson maintain their, how shall I say, unique situation.”

“When can I meet Mr. Jefferson?”

“Oh, in the next few days. He’s currently in Haiti. You see, the project of which you overheard in the Bristol has met with an unforeseen delay. Mr. Jefferson is currently, let us say, expediting the situation and should return presently. In the meantime, please avail yourself of our hospitality. Anything you need is available. Simply call the concierge or myself. Upon his return, I will arrange for you to visit with Mr. Jefferson. Believe me, it shouldn’t be long. Sometimes these matters become a bit more complex than they should, and there’s an occasional delay. But I’m sure Mr. Jefferson will straighten it all out as soon as humanly possible.”

“What matters? What delays? What are you talking about?”

“I believe, doctor, I will leave that for Mr. Jefferson to address upon his return. For now, I bid you a pleasant evening. Don’t concern yourself with any charges at the beach club, at Alfonso’s or with any of the Patel stores. By the way, I’ve taken the liberty of asking Nunzio to assign you a car and driver 24 hours a day with our compliments. So enjoy your stay, please. I will contact you upon Mr. Jefferson’s return. *Wiedersehen.*”

My head was spinning. I felt as though I’d been set up, but I also felt pure exhilaration. One thing was sure – I’d lost control of my life for the time being. It was now being dictated to me by a strange and maniacal man who apparently knew everyone and everything. And, though he was obviously charming and gracious, he was a man used to having his way.

For the next four days I amused myself by exploring San Felipe, certain that the jitney driver reported everything I did and everywhere I went. I confined my activities to exploring the island. I went to Pitts Key. I visited the avocado grove at Mundo Grande, and took my meals either at the beach club or Alfonso’s. I was cautious and prudent. I rarely drank any alcoholic beverages. I didn’t engage the jitney driver in any conversations beyond polite small talk. Even when the attractive waitress at Alfonso’s made it obvious her concept of service extended well beyond food and drink, I kept my aloofness.

On February 7, I was having breakfast at Alfonso’s and watching the CNN report of the departure of Baby Doc Duvalier from Haiti, when I was handed a phone. It was Schmidt.

“Mr. Jefferson would like you to be his guest for lunch today, if you’re available. Shall I tell him you’ll accept?”

“Yes, of course, naturally.”

“*Ausgezeichnet,*” Schmidt enthused. “I’m sure you’ll want to freshen up beforehand. I’ll instruct the jitney driver to pick you up at 11:50, since it’s approximately a ten minute drive from the hotel to Mr. Jefferson’s home.”

At exactly noon we pulled into the courtyard of a large Bermuda-style house overlooking Pitts Key. I knocked on the mahogany door and in a few seconds it was opened by a very distinguished looking houseman, wearing an immaculate white serving coat and possessing a charming British accent.

“Dr. Livingston, do come in. Mr. Jefferson is expecting you. Follow me, if you please.”

The house was large, far larger than it appeared from outside. It also was light, airy and spotlessly maintained. The furnishings came from the same sources that had been called upon to decorate the hotel. Casual, yet elegant.

“Mr. Jefferson is in the sitting room,” announced the houseman.

We entered a large room that was comfortably masculine. There, sitting in a wing-back British club chair, sat a tall, lean man with thinning white hair.

“Ah, Dr. Livingston, I presume,” he bellowed in a deep voice. “Come in. Come in.”

Now normally I hate it when people say, “Dr. Livingston, I presume.” But there was something about the twinkle in his eye, the look on his mottled face, and what the military call “command presence” that immediately won me over. He stood up and we shook hands. He looked at the houseman and said, “Smyte, bring Dr. Livingston a gin and tonic, and I’ll have another one also, please.”

“Very good, sir,” said Smyte as he retired from the room.

“Well, doctor, you’re finally here.”

“Yes, Mr. Jefferson, I certainly am.”

“Please call me J3. For awhile there, I didn’t think you’d make it. Sorry for the delay in getting together, but I had to make an urgent trip to Haiti to convince that fat idiot bastard Baby Doc that it was time to go. We’d all hoped he would leave a lot sooner, but sometimes these matters take more time than one would expect. In any event, the important thing is he’s gone, and maybe now the people of Haiti can get on with the business of rebuilding their country.”

It was the way he said it that captivated me – straightforward, *realpolitik* with an energy and enthusiasm you would expect from a man half his age.

“So tell me doctor, how are you enjoying your visit to San Felipe, and what have you been doing?”

“Well,” I replied, “I suspect you know everything I’ve been doing.”

“Possibly, but nonetheless I’d like to hear it from you.”

And so I told him of all my activities on San Felipe. I also answered questions regarding my academic back-ground, my travels, my personal life and, under gentle prodding, my political and social beliefs. All in all, it was a most remarkable interview, and I found myself telling this total stranger intimate details of my life I never suspected I’d share.

As I concluded my story, Smyte materialized again and my host ordered up another round of gin and tonics. Normally, I’m a temperate man, but the circumstances were so congenial I agreed to another gin and tonic. When Smyte had left the room, I asked incredulously, “A British butler?”

He threw his head back and laughed.

“I know. I know. It seems a little out of character, but I’m not getting any younger, and Smyte provides excellent service. You see, at heart I’m just a slob, and he keeps this place neat as a pin and running like a Swiss watch. The empire may be gone,” he went on, “but the British still produce the best butlers in the world, you’ll have to allow. Besides, there’s more to Smyte than meets the eye. Until eight years ago he was with S.O.E.⁽⁶⁾ He can be a damned handy man to have around the house for more than the spectacular martinis he makes.”

As if on cue, Smyte re-entered the room with a silver tray containing our two drinks and, as he served mine, I noticed a barely perceptible bulge under the left breast of his perfectly tailored white serving coat.

“To your good health, Dr. Livingston,” said my host, raising his glass.

“And to yours, Mr. Jefferson,” I responded.

“No, no, no. Call me J3. All my friends do.”

“All right, Mr. – I mean, J3. To your good health. J3 – unusual moniker, but from the looks of it, that’s what everyone calls you.”

“Indeed it is, but I wasn’t always J3...”

Chapter One

* * * *

I Wasn't Always J3

My dad wasn't one to let a fact get in the way of a good story. And since I was born early in the morning on November 16, 1907, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, my dad liked to tell everyone I was the first natural born citizen of the Sooner State. You see, November 16, 1907, was the day Oklahoma became the 46th state. Now, my father had no way of knowing if I was the first child to be born under statehood, but he knew a good story when he heard one or told one. He and my mother had moved to Tulsa two years earlier from Kansas City, Missouri, where they'd been childhood sweethearts, and had married in 1904.

But in 1905, my father, who was a pretty good mechanic, got a job offer to work for the Goodwater Machinery Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Glenn Pool⁽¹⁾ had been discovered, and Goodwater Machinery couldn't keep up with the demand for oil field equipment. So my folks packed up and did what so many Americans have done. They went West, looking for a new life and new opportunity, which they pretty much found.

Mr. Goodwater was a good boss and a good friend to my dad; so much so that when I was born, I was named James Jeremiah Jefferson. Back then there was no "the third" after my name. Everybody just called me Jimmy Jefferson. I was actually named after two people. The James was my maternal grandfather's name, and the Jeremiah came from Mr. Goodwater, whose name was Jeremiah. My parents wanted to thank him the most special way they could think of. They did it by appending his name to their only child.

I had an average childhood growing up in Tulsa. It was an exciting place to be at that time, what with the Glenn Pool making lots of folks rich. Although we weren't rich, we were comfortable. My dad or mom never had any formal education, but my dad loved to read and he loved history. I guess that's where I got my interest in it. I've loved books for as long as I can remember. It was great fun sitting around the dining room table talking current events and history with dad.

In spite of the fact that I loved to read, I wasn't much of a student. I was bored with school. So when I was graduated from high school in June 1925 the thought of going to college never entered anyone's mind. Back then college was for exceptional students or kids from rich families. I didn't qualify on either front, so it was time for me to make my way in the world.

Up 'til then, I'd never been outside of Oklahoma. But I had started developing an itch to see the rest of the world. I'd mostly been reading American history, and I decided New Orleans would be just the place for an ambitious young man to start his career. In September, with the princely sum of three hundred dollars in my pocket – money I'd received as graduation presents or had saved from doing odd jobs – I made my way to what was then and still is today the most exotic city in the United States.

I moved into a little boarding house near the waterfront and set about to make my mark on the world. Well, that turned out to be a lot easier said than done. For the next year, all I could find was a succession of odd jobs. You know, manual labor. I was getting discouraged and thinking maybe I should move back to Tulsa when, in January of 1927, I saw a small ad in the help wanted section of the *Times-Picayune* for a clerk at the Solomon & Co. cotton trading firm. The next day I went in and met the man who was destined to change my life, Mr. Samuel Solomon.

Mr. Solomon was the most remarkable man I ever knew. He was deeply religious, and totally devoted to three things: his synagogue, his family and his business. He conducted business on a handshake, and his word was good as gold. You could take it to the bank. If he gave you his

word he would pay you X dollars on a certain date, you could go to a half dozen banks in town and borrow that amount using Mr. Solomon's promise as collateral.

He didn't smoke. He didn't drink. He definitely didn't chase women. Made me wonder what the hell he was doing in New Orleans.

Well, I'll tell you what he was doing – making a lot of money. Solomon & Co. wasn't the biggest cotton trader in town, not by any stretch of the imagination, but, boy, was it profitable. That was because Mr. Solomon knew everything and everybody when it came to the cotton business. He knew if someone had to sell a load of cotton cheaply, 'cause they were in trouble, and he knew if somebody had to get a carload of cotton quickly and was willing to pay a premium. And he could figure out how to get it there the fastest.

He kept all this information and more – not in files, but in his head. Still don't know how he did it. It was from Mr. Solomon that I discovered how valuable information can be, especially if you know what to look for in it. Knowledge really is power. Used correctly, it's the most valuable commodity in the world.

I was nervous as could be when I interviewed with him. Here was this austere man with piercing blue eyes asking questions that made me feel like I was on trial. His face revealed nothing as to how my answers were received.

“You say you like to read?”

“Yes sir, I sure do.”

“What have you read, and what do you like to read?”

So I told him the books I'd read and how much I enjoyed reading about contemporary affairs and history.

“Good,” he said, and he proceeded to cross-examine me on minute details of history and current events. I must've answered correctly, because at the end of our interview Mr. Samuel Solomon offered me what I've always said was the best job I ever had. It was a job totally unique to Solomon & Co. and one that was destined to change my life.

Today governments and large companies spend huge sums of money gathering information – overtly and covertly – so they can chart their courses of action, know what their friends and enemies are up to, and try to anticipate what it all means to their particular undertaking. It all requires sifting through a lot of information. For instance, in this day and age the President of the United States receives a thing called the PDB, the President's Daily Brief. It compiles and digests news going on all over the world, and it's marked TOP SECRET – FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY.

Long before the PDB existed, Mr. Samuel Solomon was doing the same thing. My job, as it turned out, was to spend the hours of eight to five, six days a week, reading virtually every English language publication under the sun. He subscribed to 'em all – newspapers and magazines from everywhere. I had to pick out articles and information that might be of interest to Mr. Solomon, which turned out to be just about everything.

Every morning at eight o'clock, Sunday through Friday (In deference to his religious beliefs, Mr. Solomon never worked on Saturdays.), I'd go in and hand him a folder full of newspaper and magazine articles I had clipped out, and review with him a list of other interesting facts from my reading which I noted on a pad of legal paper. He'd ask questions, maybe ask for more information, and that was it. Our meetings would last anywhere from only a few minutes to several hours. He had a piercing intellect and a prodigious memory. Nothing, and I mean nothing, ever escaped the man.

More than anything else, he taught me how to think. He taught me the inner relationships between events – how a seemingly isolated event in, say, Europe could affect Central America and the impact it would have on shipping out of the port of New Orleans. The long-term consequences,

the short-term consequences, how it all came together. It was amazing. Even though I was only supposed to work six days a week from eight to five, I found myself putting in 14, 15, 16-hour days, seven days a week. I just couldn't get enough of it. I actually felt sorry for the poor fool who'd had the job before me and resigned because he found it "tedious."

In June of 1931 I was sitting at my desk reading, when Mr. Solomon came up to me.

"Jeremiah, meet me in my office. I have something I wish to discuss with you privately," he said.

Mr. Solomon is the person who started calling me Jeremiah. When I had interviewed with him four years earlier, he had asked me, "What does the 'J' stand for in your middle initial?"

"Jeremiah," I responded.

"Are you a religious man?"

"Not particularly."

"Well, I believe the integrity of Jeremiah might be just what the wisdom of Solomon could use."

And from that day on, I became Jeremiah. But in all of the years I knew him, I never called him anything other than Mr. Solomon.

I sat down in my usual chair in his sparsely furnished office, wondering what this could be about. It seemed so out of character for him. We rarely spoke except at our morning meetings or to exchange an occasional pleasantry during the day.

After I'd settled in, Mr. Solomon said to me, "Jeremiah, I'm thinking of expanding into trading bananas, but before I do, I want to find out an awful lot more about the economics, the true economics of the business. Zemurray⁽²⁾ has been making a fortune year in and year out in the banana trade for the last 20 years. What I want you to do is go down to Honduras and look around. Gather as much information as you can. Find out what's really going on between Zemurray's Cuymamel Banana Company and United Fruit. They basically control the worldwide trade in bananas. They also run Honduras like a private plantation. Go on down there and let's see if we can find out what the real economics of the business are – not just what Sam says."

And he handed me an oversized envelope containing a substantial sum of cash, passage on the American Steamer Line for a round trip from New Orleans to Honduras, and, most curious of all, a British passport made out to J. Jeremiah Jefferson III.

"Mr. Solomon, there must be a mistake. I'm an American, not a Brit."

"Quite right, but it's been my experience that doors tend to open more freely for aristocratic Englishmen than they do for Americans, particularly in Central America. Also, I don't want anyone to know you are from New Orleans and possibly conclude why you are in Honduras."

"But J. Jeremiah Jefferson III?"

"Well, I thought a Roman numeral at the end of your name gave it a certain, how shall we say, *gravitas*," he chuckled ever so slightly.

"Mr. Solomon, no one's going to believe this Okie is an aristocratic Englishman."

"Jeremiah, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If you say you're an aristocrat from England, who's to say you're not? Believe me, most people want to believe the illusion rather than the reality."

"Is this a genuine British passport?"

"Of course it is, Jeremiah."

"Where did you get it? I mean, J. Jeremiah Jefferson III on a genuine British passport?"

"Jeremiah, I'm surprised at you. This is, after all, New Orleans."

"All right, Mr. Solomon. I'll do the best I can, sir. I'll buy a diary on my way home tonight to record my expenses and, of course, I'll get as many receipts as possible."

"No, don't do that, Jeremiah. I trust you and, besides, several of the people you'll be seeing probably would be most reluctant to give you a receipt," he said, handing me a list of names.

As I stood to leave, he looked at me and frowned, “Jeremiah, be very careful, won’t you?”

Three days later I departed on my first journey outside of the United States to the exotic and little known country of Honduras. I was now J. Jeremiah Jefferson III, a British citizen with an official passport to prove it.

Mr. Solomon had been right about Zemurray, known to all the world as “Sam the Banana Man.” He was born in 1880 in Russia and had immigrated to America as a young child. He spoke English and Spanish with a Russian accent and, most improbable of all, lived in Mobile, Alabama. He was completely ruthless and basically ran the country of Honduras. He once said, “Bribery is so cheap in Honduras, a mule is worth more than a congressman.”

He financed and ran the liberal party, picking the presidents. He had so much influence he once put an American mercenary named Lee Christmas – a black American no less – in charge as commander-in-chief of the Honduran army.⁽³⁾ He also hired another charmer by the name of Machine Gun Guy Maloney, a former New Orleans cop, whose job consisted of making sure nobody organized a labor union in Honduras, or at least not in Zemurray’s banana fields. This was not a nice man.

Honduras always has been a mess, and to a large extent the problems can be laid right at the feet of Sam the Banana Man. The U.S. Marines invaded there in 1903 and 1923. There were revolutions in 1931, 1933 and 1937. Although it wasn’t written at the time of my first trip to Honduras, you might want to check out a novel by Ramon Amaya Amador about the working conditions on a typical banana plantation. The title says it all: “Green Prison.”

Before leaving New Orleans, I did read O. Henry’s collection of short stories, “Cabbages and Kings,” in which he portrayed Honduras as the first banana republic, populated with corrupt politicians and bureaucrats, backward peasants, and Yankee banana men on the make for easy money and unchecked power. O. Henry wrote “Cabbages and Kings” after living in the Hotel Lincoln in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, where he spent time on the lam from American authorities on charges of embezzlement.⁽⁴⁾

Now any other self-respecting Central American country would’ve been mightily insulted by O. Henry, but as I say, Honduras was different. Not only were they not insulted, they built a monument to him in the port of Trujillo. I guess they subscribed to the theory that even bad publicity is better than no publicity.

For the most part, I enjoyed the trip to Honduras, with a couple of notable exceptions. Despite Mr. Solomon’s admonition about being careful, I found a certain amount of danger was unavoidable...

“You see, Mr. Jefferson, we are a civilized nation, and we condemn this type of violence,” the sergeant smiled through tobacco-stained teeth. I was standing impassively next to him, trying not to be sickened by what I was witnessing. “But sometimes it is necessary to impart lessons to those who would mock our laws and preach communism to the workers.”

The would-be labor organizer was on his hands and knees in the dirt of the banana grove, the blood running from his mouth and mixing with the rich black soil. The two soldiers held their rifles stock-down, poised to strike again.

The dozen or so scrawny, ill-fed peons stood silently looking on. The object lesson staged by Zemurray’s goons was not lost on them. There would be no unions here.

The sergeant leaned forward slightly to light the cigarette he’d handed me, which was dangling in my mouth. That was also part of the “hospitality” I was being shown to convince me of

the wisdom of investing in the Honduran banana business. In addition to the lure of no taxes, the powers-that-be had arranged to show me – more than once – that I could count on state-sanctioned brutality to keep labor costs low. This was the second time I'd witnessed this kind of episode during my brief visit.

When he finished lighting my cigarette, the sergeant bowed with an arrogant smirk, momentarily letting down his guard. I'd seen enough, by god, and I instinctively decided to take advantage of the sergeant's relaxed posture. My right leg shot out, kicking his left kneecap perfectly. As he doubled over in shocked surprise, I lifted both of my arms over his head, coupling my hands together and crashing them down on him in a powerful rage. The loud snap reverberated through the banana grove.

The soldiers jerked toward me, flipping their rifles upward to their shoulders. Suddenly the thin one released a blood-curdling scream as a machete severed his right arm. The fat one, distracted by his comrade's scream, never saw the peon's machete enter his spleen.

"Sic semper tyrannis," I thought to myself.

I ran over to the battered man who was still on his hands and knees. *"Como esta usted?"* I asked, dropping to my knees so I could examine his bloodied face.

"I'll be okay," he coughed in English, "but I think that you, my friend, should not return to Tegucigalpa."

And that, doctor, is why you saw that picture of me at the beach club, standing on the deck of the American Steamer Line ship wearing – I assure you for the first and last time in my life – a dress and wig, waving *adios* to Honduras.

Well, that was my first of many trips for Mr. Solomon. I liked Honduras, I must confess. Where else can you have a capital city that doesn't have a road accessing the rest of the country? I'm not kidding you. At that time, Tegucigalpa didn't have a major road in or out of it. And I met some interesting people. Mr. Solomon was right. Doors seemed to open easily and nobody questioned the fact that I had an aristocratic name with an Oklahoma accent.

In the end, I advised Mr. Solomon that, given the circumstances of the banana business in Honduras, he'd be much better served just avoiding it altogether. He obviously agreed, because a month later in my pay envelope was an extra thousand dollars and a note from him thanking me for a job well done.

Not only was it the first of many trips I took for Mr. Solomon, it was the first of many bonuses I received.

Soon I was traveling all over the Caribbean and Central America, analyzing situations for Mr. Solomon and meeting lots of fascinating and interesting people. Transportation was incredibly difficult – still is for that matter – so Mr. Solomon both encouraged and paid for me to learn to fly this newfangled thing called the seaplane. When Mr. Solomon wanted me to get somewhere, I'd rent a seaplane and off I'd go. And he wanted me to go a lot of places. You see, he was convinced there was enormous potential in Mexico, the Caribbean and Central America. Not just for cotton, but for all sorts of commodities and products. And with me acting as his eyes, ears and legs, his horizons were constantly changing.

It was on a mission for Mr. Solomon in 1937 I first got interested in coffee in Guatemala, although I didn't do anything about it for 14 years. It was that trip and discussions with Mr. Solomon which planted the germ of an idea. I owe him an awful lot in so many ways. When I tell you there'd be no Caribbean Traders today if it hadn't been for Mr. Solomon, I know what I'm talking about. And when I tell you I wouldn't be what I am today without Mr. Solomon, I know what I'm talking about.

In 1939 I was still living in the same little boarding house I'd originally moved into when I first came to New Orleans. I was traveling six months of the year for Mr. Solomon and when I was in New Orleans I was still putting in 12 and 14 hour days, six and seven days a week at Solomon & Co. By now, Mr. Solomon had hired another fella to take on the day-to-day reading chores. Because of all this, and coupled with ever increasing bonuses, I was amassing a pretty tidy little sum of money. All my expenses on the road were paid for, and I really didn't have too many expenses when I was in New Orleans.

I kept thinking I should move into a nicer place, but then I'd ask myself why. I wasn't married, and there wasn't any serious prospect of that on the horizon. So over the years I just stayed put. Also over the years my affection for Mr. Solomon continued to grow. He was a man of complete integrity and intellect. In my life I've met more than my fair share of leaders to compare him with. He encouraged me to learn and try new things. He was generous of spirit, time and money, and if I made a mistake he never lost his temper, but rather turned it into a learning experience. He didn't just preach the virtues of honesty and integrity. He lived them. And Mr. Solomon was this way with virtually every person he came in contact with. I once tried to count the number of lives he had touched, but I literally ran out of paper.

Since he was a Jew, he knew the pain of discrimination. And although New Orleans was located in what was then the segregated South, that didn't stop Mr. Solomon from hiring blacks and other minorities, not just for manual labor jobs, but for management positions. The first black trader on the New Orleans cotton exchange worked for Solomon & Co. When the Klan burned a cross at the house of one of Mr. Solomon's employees, he simply picked up the phone, called the Kingfish, Huey P. Long⁽⁵⁾, then governor of Louisiana, and said if anything like that ever happened again with any of his employees, Solomon & Co. would relocate to Chicago. Nothing ever happened again while Mr. Solomon was alive.

On September 7, 1939, Samuel Jacob Solomon stood up from his desk at five o'clock as was his custom, put on his suit coat to go home to his wife, and keeled over dead from a massive stroke. He was 63 years old.

I was in Havana when the telegram arrived the next day from the home office, informing me of Mr. Solomon's death and instructing me to return to New Orleans posthaste. I stood in the lobby of the Hotel Ambos Mundos overwhelmed. It was impossible to believe he was gone. I'd talked with him on the phone just two days earlier. My mind was a mass of jumbled thoughts and emotions. I numbly walked out into the street. I must've wandered around Havana for hours. I really don't know how long it was.

I stopped and looked when I chanced upon a synagogue. By then I had no idea what part of town I was in. So I stopped and looked at it, more in the hope of getting a sense of where I was than anything else. Then I was struck by a thought. I'm not much of one for public emotions and up until this point I had contained myself at the news of Mr. Solomon's passing. But suddenly, as I stood there, I was overwhelmed with the need to honor the man and his values. A man I had come to know, respect, admire and love. And so, for the first time in my life, I entered a Jewish synagogue. A Protestant from Oklahoma seeking comfort in one of God's houses.

I sat down in the back row and suddenly started to cry. I have no idea how long I was there crying and overcome with emotion, knowing for certain I would never again talk to this good and decent man. I started to pray, praying harder than any time in my life – and believe me there have been many occasions in my life when prayer was needed. I started praying not for the deliverance of Mr. Solomon's immortal soul, for I knew that if there was a god He was clutching Mr. Solomon to His breast and thanking him for being the man he was. No, what I prayed for and hoped for was that

indeed there was a god and a life hereafter, so Mr. Solomon – a devout and religious man – could be received by the Almighty and told just how special he was.

I don't know how long I was in the synagogue, but when I finally was composed enough to leave, the streets outside were dark and barren. As I walked out into the damp night air, I felt as though a part of my soul had been taken from me. I returned to the hotel and made arrangements to depart the next morning for New Orleans.

When I arrived at the office on the morning of September 10, I was greeted with a scene of total bedlam. No one had anticipated Mr. Solomon might die, and there was no contingency or succession plan in place. Neither his wife nor his two daughters had shown any interest in the company. One son-in-law was a doctor, the other a professor of history at LSU in Baton Rouge.

The staff was completely paralyzed with grief, so for the next few days we just gathered in the office, not accomplishing anything, but simply consoling each other. Eventually, Mrs. Solomon appointed Reuben Ronstein, who had been a vice president, to fill Mr. Solomon's shoes. Reubin asked everyone to stay, including me, but my heart was no longer in it. I was just going through the motions. I didn't even know what my job was anymore. Reuben was a nice enough fella, but not particularly imaginative or bright, and really had no interest in or knowledge of the projects and assignments I did for Mr. Solomon.

I sat at my desk all day long, daydreaming and thinking about the things I wanted to accomplish. I had saved up a not insubstantial sum of money over the years. Hey, I didn't have anywhere to spend it. As I sat at my desk, I started to dream of creating a trading company centered in the part of the world I'd come to love – the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico.

I decided it would be known as Caribbean Traders.

The dream started taking shape as I envisioned using seaplanes as a new medium to connect the far-flung region. And so on December 1, 1939, I quit my job at Solomon & Co. and walked out the door into the Louisiana humidity to start living my dream.

Chapter Two

* * * *

Living the Dream

“Not many people believe they can live their dreams. I’m here to say you can. I’ve been living my dream for years! It’s called Caribbean Traders.

“In 1939, I took off in a rented Grumman Goose seaplane looking for adventure and fortune in what was then a little known and lightly populated area – the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico.

“I had a vision to create a trading empire throughout the region based on the new technology of aquatic aviation – the seaplane. Like the mariners of old, I’d buy product in one location, take it to another location and trade it for still more product that I’d take to a third location, making a handsome profit with each trade.

“My plan seemed simple enough, but I had very little money and I needed a calling card, something to set me apart. And then it happened, on February 11, 1941. Just returned to San Felipe from Tegucigalpa and desperately short on funds, I was on my way to dinner at Alfonso’s Beach Shack (the original home of guacamole dip), when I chanced upon my friend and sometimes business associate, Don Padrone.

“It was over dinner that Don Padrone said, ‘You know what you need to set Caribbean Traders apart from your stinking gringo competitors?’

“No,’ I admitted. ‘What?’

“Why a place where people can have a complimentary drink of Traders Rum, relax and look at all those exotic treasures you keep finding,’ said a grinning Don Padrone. ‘Besides, everyone in this part of the world loves your seaplane. Why not let them see it up close – even buy a model of it?’

“Come on, Don Padrone,’ I replied. ‘I don’t know anything except how to fly and trade. And what good would having such a place here in San Felipe do me in, say, the Dominican Republic?’

“That’s just it,’ said Don Padrone, warming to his subject. ‘It doesn’t have to be just a place in San Felipe. Why not locations throughout the region? People would know Caribbean Traders and your seaplane wherever you went.’

“You know, Don Padrone,’ I reflected, ‘as goofy as it sounds, that just may be the commercial edge I need. We’ll call it Caribbean Traders Unique Apparel, Merchandise, Rum, Warehouse and Seaplane Base.’

“Let’s just call it Caribbean Traders Outpost,’ he advised. ‘In fact, we can open the first one right here and I’ll manage it for you.’

“Well, after much arguing and rum, I agreed to take my few remaining dollars and follow Don Padrone’s advice. And you know what? He was right! Caribbean Traders became the sensation it is today.

“So enjoy the fun as my adventures and unique Caribbean Traders products come to life for you. Go ahead, friends. Live the dream!”

That’s the copy for the famous hang-tag that appears on all Caribbean Traders products, telling the story of how the company got started and the circumstances I found myself in.

After I took off to Havana on December 3, 1939, to try to conclude some business transactions, I found out I didn't have anywhere near as much money as I thought I had. Mr. Solomon was right. It takes a lot of money to be an international trader – a lot more than I had. Although I thought I was pretty well off when I resigned from Solomon & Co., I sure found out different real quick.

First of all, I couldn't just go down and rent a seaplane and have it billed to Solomon & Co. like I'd been doing in the past. In spite of the fact I'd rented seaplanes dozens of times, the aviation company wanted a one-year security deposit. Then I had to buy fuel and insurance. And, of course, I had to pay cash on the barrel head for my first shipment of merchandise, a seaplane full of men's tropical suits made from the finest linens.

For the next two years, I struggled mightily. I found out quickly it was one thing to be a representative of Solomon & Co. and quite another thing to be just an independent adventurer. A lot of the doors that had opened for me as Mr. Solomon's representative were suddenly closed.

I first visited San Felipe in May of 1940. At the time I was basing my operations out of Havana, where I had the most contacts. I had rented an apartment above Caribe's in the Plaza Vieja district and was barely scraping by, when I heard about a broker who was looking to buy a large quantity of goat cheese. I contacted him and he told me he'd place a large order at a generous price – if I could secure the cheese.

I had no more idea than the man in the moon how to go about finding it. But, by golly, for the next 30 days I had an exclusive arrangement and I wasn't going to lose the potential to strike a quick profit. God knows I needed the money. So I went to my landlord, Charlie Grutwilder, who owned Caribe's.

“Hey, boy, y'all buyin' or sellin' today?” Charlie greeted me with his habitual inquiry.

“I'm buying, if I can find what I'm looking for.”

As I suspected, Charlie came through with the G2 on goat cheese. He told me San Felipe was the best place to go. I confessed I'd never heard of San Felipe.

“Hell's bells, boy. You wouldn't be asking me where to buy goat cheese if you knew anything about San Felipe,” Charlie admonished, then proceeded to fill me in on the details.

The next morning I got into the seaplane and flew over to San Felipe. As I circled the island, preparing to land in the bay, I was struck by its beauty. It was just one of those things that happens occasionally in life. You see something or someone and you know it's perfect for you. It's a rare feeling, and the biggest mistake you can make is not to trust your instincts.

I landed the seaplane at the pier and looked around the place. This was several years before Nunzio's arrival, so there weren't any jitneys. People just got around on foot or horseback, since there were very few motorized vehicles on the island. San Felipe was just starting to awaken and come into its own. Alfonso's was up and running, of course, but beyond that there weren't any hotels or any of the duty-free shops you see here today. Mr. Patel had a small boarding house just off the main street for people who wanted to spend the night, and there were a couple of rooms for rent in private houses, both in San Felipe and here in Pitts Key. But there wasn't much in the way of tourism.

I stood there looking around and decided Alfonso's Beach Shack was as good a place as any to start my quest for goat cheese. As I stood at the entrance letting my eyes adjust to the cool darkness, Alfonso approached me for the first time.

“*Bienvenidos.*”

“Same to you.”

“Ah, an American. Welcome, welcome, my friend,” he said, showing me to a table. “Your waitress will be here in a moment. You look as if you might like to cool off. Would you care for some juice? A soft drink? A beer? A rum punch? A sloe gin fizz always goes well at this time of day.”

It was 9:30 in the morning.

“You know what,” I said. “That sounds like a damn good idea. I will have a sloe gin fizz.”

He lit up like a Christmas tree and smiled. I smiled back. He winked at me and said, “I will be back in a minute, my friend.”

When he returned he handed me an enormous sloe gin fizz, for which Alfonso’s is justifiably famous.

“Are you hungry, amigo?”

“*Si*, I could eat a horse.”

“Leave everything to me,” he said.

An hour later I finished consuming the best and most relaxing meal I’d had in some time. I looked around Alfonso’s and was enveloped with the rare feeling of contentment that good food and convivial atmosphere can create. He approached the table again.

“*Toto bien, señor?*”

“*Toto bien*,” I allowed. “By the way, my name’s J. Jeremiah Jefferson.”

“*Mucho gusto*. Alfonso Sanchez.”

“*Mucho gusto*,” I replied.

We shook hands warmly. It was the start of a friendship that would last for more than 20 years.

“Nice place you have here.”

“We try.”

“Look, maybe you can help me.”

“If I can.”

“Well, I have a client who is interested in procuring a large quantity of goat cheese. Don’t ask me why. But it’s one of those fancy gourmet wholesalers in Florida.”

“You have come to the right place, my friend. San Felipe goat cheese is perhaps the world’s finest.”

“That’s why I’m here. Who do I see to buy some?”

“I believe I might be of some assistance to you, *amigo*,” he said. “You see, the best goat cheese is made in the small village of Mundo Grande on the south side of the island. The problem is the villagers are extremely suspicious of strangers. They herd their goats, make their cheese, and like to be left alone. You won’t hear ‘*mucho gusto*’ spoken in Mundo Grande.”

“I see.”

“Do not be concerned. We can ride over tomorrow and see what we can do. I am on excellent terms with them, since I buy all of the avocados they produce in their grove. Do you ride?”

“Not very well, but I know one end of a horse from the other.”

“That’s all that is required, my friend. Where are you staying?”

“Well, I don’t know. I just arrived.”

“Let me call over to Mr. Patel’s boarding house. I’m sure there will be no problem in securing a room, and then tomorrow we ride together to Mundo Grande.”

“I can’t thank you enough.”

“Do not mention it, my friend. If your business is successful, perhaps you will pay me a modest processing fee.”

“If I can make this deal happen, it would be my pleasure, let me assure you.”

“Excellent,” he said. “And if you find yourself temporarily short of funds, do not hesitate to ask. I am sure I can arrange a loan for you on the most generous terms.”

The next afternoon Alfonso and I set off for Mundo Grande. Alfonso was right. It was not the home of “*mucho gusto*.” He also was right about the avocado grove. It was huge. What it was doing in the middle of the Caribbean was anyone’s guess.

As I rode out with him, I learned Alfonso had invented guacamole dip⁽¹⁾ and he got all of his avocados from this improbable grove.

After arriving, we sat down with what amounted to the village council, three extremely dangerous looking men, who looked like latter day Barbary Pirates. All that was missing was a parrot on one of their shoulders. Alfonso told them I wanted to buy goat cheese. They grunted, talked amongst themselves, and offered to sell me a thousand dollars worth of goat cheese each month for a year’s period of time. I quickly agreed and paid them in advance for the first month’s delivery. They agreed they’d deliver my first order of goat cheese in the next few days to the seaplane in San Felipe Bay.

When we left, I was beside myself with joy. Even though I would have to pay a thousand dollars a month for the goat cheese, I could sell it in Miami for four thousand. After paying Alfonso’s modest “processing fee” of 15 percent and, say, eight hundred-fifty dollars for fuel and maintenance to fly round trip to Miami twice a month, I’d have a guaranteed profit for the next year of about two thousand dollars a month. Believe me, that was big money in 1940. And the best part was I was only going to have to work a couple of days each month flying back and forth between San Felipe and Miami. This was terrific. I turned to Alfonso and said, “I can’t thank you enough.”

“No problem. No problem at all. The pleasure is mine.”

“By the way, what are the names of that motley crew?”

“I have no idea,” Alfonso replied.

“You’ve been doing business with them for over 20 years and you don’t know their names?”

“That is correct. They have never struck me as the type who invited any questions.”

In spite of the fact I had a steady stream of income from the goat cheese, I still found myself chasing deal after deal. Sometimes they paid off, sometimes they didn’t. It was all problematical. My biggest concerns were that I didn’t have any identity and I didn’t have any steady product to offer beyond my goat cheese contract. The problem with the cheese was there wasn’t much call for it beyond my customer in Miami. Anyway, the mysterious group of people in Mundo Grande couldn’t produce any more than I already was buying.

That’s when I got involved with Don Padrone.

Don Padrone became the first manager for Caribbean Traders in San Felipe, and we slowly but surely started offering products featuring the seaplane logo, which, as Don Padrone had predicted, everyone loved.

Don Padrone had been in San Felipe since the mid-1930s. No one knew the exact date of his arrival, and if Don Padrone knew he never volunteered it. He was a short, stocky man with a gigantic mane of black hair and a deep rasping voice that always announced his arrival like a foghorn. He appeared to be in his early 40s, and was originally from Guatemala. I never knew all the details as to why he had left Guatemala and come to San Felipe.

Don Padrone was a typical island hustler making his way through the world any way he could. He didn’t have any family, so he and I would occasionally while away an evening at Alfonso’s swapping tales and trying to figure out how we might make a buck. In spite of appearances to the contrary, Don Padrone had a knack for organization. I would fly around the region finding suppliers and customers for our products, and Don Padrone put our first primitive distribution system in place.

In 1943 we opened the first warehouse in what is now the Caribbean Traders distribution and manufacturing complex, and we started expanding with more locations and bigger distribution. Mind you, all of this was during the height of World War II.

Both Don Padrone and I could foresee a tremendous pent-up demand for consumer goods starting as soon as the war was over.

In spite of everything, we still weren't making a profit consistently every month. Even though sales were growing, so was my overhead. Don Padrone never wanted to be a partner in Caribbean Traders, preferring a salary and bonus over the risk of ownership. I preferred it that way, too. But it was my responsibility to make a payroll every week, pay our suppliers right away, and manage all of the hundreds of other details from a financial standpoint that you have to deal with when you're a small, independent company. Money was always a problem, and I was constantly borrowing money from Alfonso or Mr. Patel or usually both of them at outlandish interest rates, since it was impossible for Caribbean Traders to get any bank loans at that time.

I was just scraping by on a personal basis, and frankly there were many nights I'd lie in bed thinking maybe I should just chuck the whole thing and go back to New Orleans and start all over again. But I'd get up in the morning and go on with the business at hand.

By January of 1945 I found myself dealing with a paradox that's well known to anyone who's an entrepreneur. We were selling more than we'd ever imagined and were more successful in many respects than we had any right to be. Yet the more successful we became, the more we needed money to finance our growth. Things were pretty bleak. I was being crushed by a mountain of debt. Because of the war, many of my best customers, while buying and selling more Caribbean Traders merchandise, also were taking an awful long time to pay me. A couple of our major suppliers were on the verge of going out of business themselves, which would've caused me incredible problems.

I'd really painted myself into a corner. I couldn't see any way out, unless some investor would come along and buy equity in the company, 'cause I sure didn't need any more debt.

But that wasn't gonna happen. Not in the time I needed it. Although it was winding down, World War II was still raging⁽²⁾, and I figured I could hang on at best for another three or four months before the whole house of cards came tumbling down and I lost everything. Anyone who's ever started a business knows the feeling.

So on the evening of January 19, 1945, I was sitting at the bar at Alfonso's sipping a beer and feeling pretty sorry for myself when Don Padrone slid up and whispered aggressively into my ear, "J3, I need to talk to you privately."

"Sure, Don Padrone," I responded.

"No. No, not here. Let's step outside."

"Fine, just let me finish this drink...."

"No. Right now," he said, shaking his great head of hair reproachfully.

When we were alone outside on the street he gave me the news.

"A German submarine has just sunk off of the reef at Pitts Key," he said in that rasping voice of his.

At first I thought I'd misheard him.

"Are you certain? A German submarine?"

"Yes, I'm completely certain. I just came from there."

"Good god. Are there any survivors?"

"Quite a few actually. I was having dinner at Molly's when some of them came in asking for help. Some of them are injured quite badly," he went on. "So I took the jeep and told them I'd get to San Felipe as fast as I could to find some help."

"What about Doc Hogan?" I inquired.

"From the looks of it, they'll need more help than Doc Hogan can give them."

“Well, look,” I said hastily, “why don’t you go to the warehouse, get the truck. We can use that as an ambulance to bring the injured here to the clinic, and I’ll go ahead in the jeep to see if I can find out what this is all about.

“One thing we know already,” I chuckled automatically. “They don’t have very good taste in restaurants if they’re patronizing Molly’s.”

Back then Pitts Key had a population of no more than three hundred people, and when I arrived it appeared all of them had turned out to see what all the confusion was about. Milling around in front of Molly’s restaurant was a group of German sailors looking like they’d just lost their ship – which they had. Worse than that, a half dozen of them were being tended by Doc Hogan, the local physician and world-class drunk. I walked up to the German sailors who were standing in a knot, drinking coffee and looking quite the worse for wear.

“Who’s the commanding officer?” I asked.

“I am,” snapped an athletic looking man with an imperious bearing.

“I’m J. Jeremiah Jefferson,” I said, offering my hand.

“*Hauptmann* Heidrich von Steiger,” he said with a confidence his situation didn’t merit. “I wish to see the German ambassador immediately,” he ordered.

“Well, cap’n, if that’s what you want, I’m afraid you went down off the wrong island.” I withdrew my still unshaken hand. “Besides, cap’n, relax,” I continued with a bland smile. “I think the war is over for you and your men.”

We put the seriously injured on the back of the 1939 International Harvester flatbed truck that we used at Caribbean Traders, and off we went as quickly as possible to the clinic at San Felipe. Doc Hogan stayed on the back of the truck with the injured men and I drove with Steiger and Don Padrone next to me in the cab. At the clinic Doc Johnson was there to meet us and take care of the injured.

After examining the men, Johnson came out into the little waiting room and pulled me over to the side.

“Surprisingly, they’re all going to be fine,” he told me. “That old drunk Hogan saved a couple of lives tonight, believe it or not.”

“Well, that confirms it,” I said with a smile. “There really is a god, because if that doesn’t qualify as a miracle, I don’t know what does.”

“Doctor, what are the conditions of my men?” Steiger snapped, exhibiting the ill-breeding for which his kind is famous.

Doc Johnson assured him his men would be all right, and I told him, “Come on, cap’n, relax. Your men’ll be all right. Let’s go to Alfonso’s and get you a warm meal, and you can explain to me how it is you’ve come to visit our fair island.”

As we walked in, Alfonso trotted up.

“*Bienvenidos*,” he exclaimed.

“*Bitte?*” Steiger asked with a look of complete confusion.

“Ah, a German. Welcome, welcome, my friend,” Alfonso said, escorting us to a table. “Your waitress will be with you in a moment. In the meantime, you look as if you might like to cool off. Juice? A soft drink? A beer? A rum punch? A sloe gin fizz always goes well at this time of day.”

The look on Steiger’s face was priceless. With somewhat of an effort, he regained his composure and barked, “I think I would like a bratwurst and a beer,” and I found myself wanting to

slap that imperious smirk off his face and onto the next island. But Alfonso was completely nonplused.

“But of course,” he said. “This is Alfonso’s. Whatever you wish.”

After Steiger finished his bratwurst⁽³⁾ and several beers, I started to probe him gently as to the sequence of events that led him to San Felipe. A most remarkable story it was indeed. It seems Steiger and a bare skeleton crew of 37 sailors and officers had sailed from Germany December 16.

It turned out not to be the most auspicious date, since that was the same day the German army launched its ill-fated counterattack known as the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium⁽⁴⁾. Steiger’s orders were to evade the Allied dragnet that had been spread over the North Atlantic and to proceed at flank speed to a series of Caribbean and Mexican destinations and deliver boxes, which had been meticulously addressed to each location. His orders were written in precise German detail, and Steiger had done exactly as ordered. This improbable journey had taken him to the Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica, and he was on the final leg of the trip on his way to Cozumel in Yucatan, when he ran aground on Pitts Key reef.

Fortunately for Steiger and his crew, he’d been traveling at periscope depth when he hit the reef. His submarine had broken up instantly as he hit the unexpected reef at flank speed. Miraculously his crew managed to evacuate and make their way to shore.

That left Steiger sitting at Alfonso’s, six crew members in the local clinic, and 31 other officers and enlisted men trying to make the best of difficult circumstances at Pitts Key. What had done in Steiger and his ill-fated crew was the fact that San Felipe doesn’t appear on any maps – certainly not on any Nazi nautical maps. They, like a few others before them, were barreling along in what they thought was open sea when unexpectedly they ran aground. In this case off of the coral reef that makes Pitts Key such a tranquil place. Because of good luck they managed to escape, and now the German sub or at least what was left of it lay 150 feet below sea level, hanging on a hook in Davy Jones’ Locker.

“I have no idea,” Steiger said, glancing around the table when I asked him what was in the boxes he was delivering.

“My orders were to deliver the boxes and nothing more.”

“So you never looked in them to see what your cargo was?”

“Of course not. My orders were to deliver 30 boxes to each location.”

“And you have no idea what was in the boxes,” I pressed.

“Certainly not,” he snapped.

Well, if there’s anything nice to be said about the Nazis, I thought, that’s it. They sure do follow orders.

By the next morning Alfonso had arranged for a British man-o-war from the Cayman Islands to pick up Steiger and his crew and take them for what would turn out to be a relatively short stay at a British prisoner of war camp in the Bahamas, where the governor general was the Duke of Windsor⁽⁵⁾.

“What do you think is in those boxes?” Don Padrone asked me solemnly.

“I have no idea, but we’re sure to find out in the next week or so, because undoubtedly either the Brits or the United States will send a salvage team to pick over the remains of Steiger’s sub.”

“You know, J3,” suggested Don Padrone with a very furrowed brow, “I would be willing to wager that whatever is in those boxes is extremely valuable. Why else would the Nazi high command risk one of their submarines?”

“I don’t know, Don Padrone, but I can tell you this. I agree with you. From what I read in the paper, the Nazi war effort has only a few submarines left, and sending one of them off on a mission to the Caribbean with a greatly reduced crew doesn’t seem like the smartest use of resources. But then Hitler has surprised us in the past with incredible stupidity.”⁽⁶⁾

“Nonetheless, my friend,” Don Padrone urged with a slight smile, “it might be advantageous for us to pay a visit to the U-505⁽⁷⁾. You still have your scuba equipment?” he asked with raised eyebrows.

Early the next morning, as day was breaking, Don Padrone maneuvered his 1936 Chris Craft motorboat over the German U-505. The water near that part of the island is clear enough that you can see all the way to the bottom, and there she lay. She had obviously hit the reef at high speed, and her stem was crumbled like a car that had hit a brick wall. That Steiger and his men had survived was nothing short of a miracle from what I could see. What was more amazing is it appeared Don Padrone and I were the only two who up until then had thought about seeing if the sub held anything of value, although I knew that circumstance would change in the near term.

I adjusted my scuba gear, checked my tanks and flipped over the side of the Chris Craft. It was only a short way down and I had no difficulty entering the submarine. The escape hatches were all open and I floated lazily into what was once a potent weapon of war.

It was lying serenely on its left side, and so as I entered the conning tower I was slightly disoriented as if in a room that had somehow been shifted 90 degrees to the left. In spite of the devastation, I managed to adjust quickly to what by any measure was a bizarre scene. The incident had been so sudden and violent that Steiger and his crew had no time to seal off the ship. They at least had the wits about them to exit as quickly as possible before they were overwhelmed with water.

I mucked around the ship, my underwater torch searching here and there, and finally I found it. In the bow of the ship in what previously had been the forward torpedo tubes, amongst a school of fish that had come to investigate, was a riot of large wooden boxes. Most appeared to have escaped the horrible impact unharmed; however, three or four of them were shattered, their contents laying scattered nearby.

“What the hell is this?” I asked myself. In the dim underwater light of my torch, it appeared Steiger’s precious cargo consisted of bricks, ordinary red construction bricks. “Why in god’s name would the Nazis want to distribute bricks to their operatives in the Caribbean and Mexico?” I wondered. I descended slowly and picked up one of the bricks. By the light of my underwater torch I examined it closely. “By god, red building bricks,” I exclaimed only to myself. This was completely preposterous. In its final days this is what the master race, the Third Reich, the Thousand Year Reich⁽⁸⁾ was sending out as farewell gifts to its Caribbean agents. Red clay bricks. “Enjoy your new home. Your friend, A. Hitler.”

I was just about to throw the brick down into the pile when it occurred to me Don Padrone would never believe this. So I swam back up lugging a brick with me, so he could see with his own eyes the treasure of Pitts Key. I broke the water’s surface, moved my diving mask from my face to my forehead and triumphantly held the brick above my head with two hands.

“Here, Don Padrone, the treasure of the U-505,” I exclaimed.

“You must be joking,” he replied. “It’s a brick.”

“I know. I know.”

I was just getting ready to release the brick back to the waiting fish when for an inexplicable reason I decided to heft it onto the boat. As it came whirling toward the deck, Don Padrone let loose a cry of protest. It was one of the last of the mahogany boats ever built, but I didn't care. I had wasted a morning that would've been better served worrying about Caribbean Traders and its problems. The brick landed with a thud on the foredeck of the Chris Craft and skidded to a stop.

By the time I had crawled on deck, Don Padrone was examining the brick and the damage it had caused to the mahogany.

"I'm sorry," I apologized to Don Padrone as I flipped up on deck. "I just got carried away. I'll pay for the damage."

He fixed me with piercing eyes.

"Come here, J3, and look at this."

"Come on, Don Padrone. I said I'd pay for whatever was needed to restore your boat. I'm sorry."

"I don't care about the stinking boat," he huffed. "Look. Look at this," he said, working with his pocket knife.

It only took me a couple of seconds to reach him, but he was already gleefully scraping away on the brick. He turned and looked at me with what I thought was an exaggerated expression of disbelief.

"Gold," he whispered. "Solid gold."

For the next 12 hours, Don Padrone and I worked like two men possessed. I would dive to the submarine, collect as many bricks as possible and bring them to the surface where Don Padrone stood watch on the boat. When the load got too large to be discreetly hidden, we'd make a mad dash around the island to the Caribbean Traders warehouse, where, using all the stealth we could, we stored them in a bin which previously had been reserved for "Books – Self-Help."

That no one else ever came or bothered us was unbelievable, and also a tribute to the laissez-faire attitude of the people of San Felipe. All in all, we had salvaged 30 cartons, each containing 15 ten-pound gold bricks. A total of 4,500 pounds of pure gold, worth over two and a half million dollars at the then current price. We were rich beyond our wildest dreams.

Don Padrone and I agreed to split this latter day Eldorado 50-50, and then we turned our attention to the very real problem of converting it to cash.

The next time I need to fence two and a quarter tons of gold it should be a lot easier, but let me tell you, Don Padrone and I had our work cut out for us in 1945. Forty-five hundred pounds of anything is not easily moved under the best of circumstances. Naturally, Don Padrone and I didn't want anyone asking questions about why we were moving a truckload of bricks around. Then we were faced with the question of where to move it. You don't just walk into your local pawn shop with two tons of gold.

It was obvious we couldn't sell our newly acquired hoard to anyone on San Felipe. Not even Alfonso had that kind of money. We had to get it to one of the major islands, and do it in such a way the local customs officials wouldn't suspect anything. The good news is the Germans had gone to the trouble of disguising the gold as everyday construction bricks. Don Padrone and I stacked the bricks on wooden pallets, along with several hundred real bricks for further concealment, and took

them down to the pier where we had 'em loaded on the Star of Antigua II, a tramp steamer run by the Wharton shipping line, which was leaving San Felipe bound for Havana.

The harbor master thought I was nuts.

"J3," he sighed in disbelief, "talk about hauling coals to Newcastle. About the last thing the Cubans need to import are bricks. They produce all the bricks they need. Who the hell is gonna buy these, and how in god's name can you make any money after you pay the shipping charges?"

"Well, these are special bricks," I retorted. "Extra strong and guaranteed to withstand the strongest hurricane. These are just samples we're going to use for demonstrations and experiments with some contractors we know in Havana."

He rolled his eyes and handed me a copy of the manifest.

"Good luck, J3. Oh, and by the way, if you're ever in the market for a handful of magic beans, let me know."

Needless to say, Don Padrone and I accompanied the bricks on the short trip to Havana, taking turns watching them while the other fella slept. The crew of the Star of Antigua II thought we were plumb nuts, but we were willing to put up with the heat and discomfort to make sure none of our bricks suddenly vanished.

After a day and a half we arrived in Havana. Now you have to remember at that time Cuba was led by a fella named Fulgencio Batista⁽⁹⁾, a former army sergeant who in 1934 had overthrown the government of Gerardo Machado. Batista's Cuba was just as corrupt as it came. It was a brutal and repressive police state. Dissent wasn't tolerated or allowed, and the place was run for the convenience of organized crime from the United States. There were crooked gambling casinos, prostitution, loan sharking, trafficking in stolen goods, gun running, extortion and murder-for-hire. You could get anything you wanted, if you had the money. In short, it was the perfect place to unload two tons of gold with no questions asked.

"Building bricks. What a most curious thing to bring to Cuba," said the sergeant in charge of customs, with a suspicious look. "I thought you sold apparel, J3, but now this. Caribbean Traders bricks. Tell me, do the bricks have your little airplane picture on them?" He laughed as he examined one of the bricks.

"No. No, nothing like that," I stammered. "No, you see these are specially fabricated bricks with an extremely high tensile strength, so they can be used in building foundations and not be affected by heat and dampness. It's the latest technology, and if it works in our experiments here, all the new housing in Cuba will use these bricks," I lied convincingly.

"I see. Well, then these must be very expensive. Possibly they require a special import duty," he said, returning the brick to its place on the pallet.

"As you know, Cuba is a poor country, J3, and it is my job to make certain the government collects a fair amount on everything imported here," he droned with a mirthless smile.

"Of course. Of course. You know me, Pedro. I wouldn't have it any other way, but I'm in a bit of a hurry," I continued, "and I really don't have the time to fill out all the necessary paperwork. I'm wondering if I were to pay a small processing fee, would you handle that for me?" I suggested, pressing a one hundred dollar bill into his palm as I shook his hand.

"J3, it would be my pleasure," he grinned. "May your bricks improve the quality of life for all Cubans."

While all this was going on, Don Padrone had gone to rent a flatbed truck, which he pulled up next to the pallets of bricks.

"Well, if there's nothing further, sergeant, we'll be on our way."

The sergeant ordered some of his men to help us load the bricks on the truck, and in no time at all we were rambling through the narrow streets of Havana on our way to Caribe's.

“J3, you’re a helluva sight for sore eyes,” boomed Charlie Grutwilder in a Texas accent you could cut with a knife. “Where the hell ya been, boy?”

“Oh, here and there, Charlie. Here and there. Shake hands with my pal Don Padrone.”

“Mighty proud to meet ya.”

“*Mucho gusto*,” rasped Don Padrone in his foghorn voice.

“Y’all buyin’ or sellin’ today?”

“Charlie, that depends on you,” I said. “I’d like to sell, but you’re so damned cheap I don’t suppose you’ll make it worth my while.”

“Well, boy, depends on what y’all got. Tell me whatcha have and let’s see if we can lather it up and shave it.”

And so I did.

“Sweet Jesus,” whistled Charlie. “Y’all help y’self to a rum and coke, and let me make a call or two and see what I can do.” And off he went to the back room, which was his office. “Oh, and if anybody comes in, tell ‘em we’re closed for the day, y’hear?”

About an hour later Charlie came back out.

“Here’s the deal boys, and don’t try an’ dick around with me, J3. This is the best y’all gonna do. The market value on that gold is two million, five hundred twenty thousand dollars, U.S. I have an associate who’ll take the load today for two million sixteen thousand dollars, cash. That’s a 20 percent discount, and by god boy, y’all won’t do better’n that unless y’all sell it one bar at a time.”

“What do you think, Don Padrone?”

He was standing there, appraising Charlie coldly. “Does that include your fee?”

“You bet, *amigo*,” Charlie beamed in his most avuncular fashion.

“Then I think it’s a fair deal,” Don Padrone gestured impatiently.

“Good. Good deal,” Charlie concluded. “Leave ever’thing to me. It’ll take a few hours. How do y’all wanna be paid?”

“I want mine in C.A.S.H.,” said Don Padrone.

“Same thing, J3?” Charlie asked.

“No, Charlie. Actually, I’d like mine wired to Coots Bank in London to the escrow account of Middleberg, Tweed, Andrews and Crump, to the attention of Davis Andrews.”

“Got it, podner,” boomed Charlie as he disappeared into his office.

When he was gone, Don Padrone looked at me. “You trust this guy?” he worried.

“More than anyone else in Havana.” And if it sounded like a case of damning with faint praise, I told myself we’d just have to wait and see.

But Charlie came through. Three days later, Don Padrone and I were back in San Felipe. He had a million dollars in cash hidden in his house, and I had over a million dollars sitting in Davis Andrews’ escrow account in London.

Having cash in the bank is a wondrous thing.

I paid back loans to Alfonso and Mr. Patel, used some of the money to expand the warehouse and ended up buying three of my suppliers’ factories at what turned out to be bargain basement prices. They just couldn’t hold on any more and were delighted to walk away with cash in their pockets. I was happy because I now owned the means of production and I could expand it.

The war had ended with Germany’s surrender on May 7 and Japan’s on September 2. My timing couldn’t have been better. As Don Padrone and I had speculated, there was a pent up demand for consumer goods, now that the war was over, and orders started pouring into Caribbean Traders.

Thanks to the U-505, I had the money and the factories to fill those orders and Caribbean Traders took off like Topsy.

On June 21, 1946, I flew Don Padrone to Guatemala.

“Are you sure about this?” I quizzed him on the flight over.

“Absolutely, my friend. I have enough money now to clean up some messy problems I had left behind. And I’m buying a large coffee plantation just outside of Antigua that I’ve had my eye on for some time.”

Six months later Caribbean Traders started selling San Felipe Supremo Coffee, all the coffee beans of which were grown on Don Padrone’s plantation.

Things started moving rapidly. In 1947 based on the strength of my now cleaned up balance sheet, I managed to secure a loan from N.T. Butterfield and Sons of Bermuda to buy a fleet of brand new Grumman Goose seaplanes that became the backbone of the Caribbean Traders air service operation. In 1948 we started building the beach club, and in 1950 I finally had enough money and felt confident enough to build myself a permanent home here.

Like today, the fashionable place to live back then was on the hills high above San Felipe with a view of the bay and the pier and the town below. Mr. Patel had a lot available with a sweeping view of the bay that he offered to sell on very generous terms. I was just about to buy it from him when one Sunday I was over in Pitts Key, and Molly told me about an available lot high in the hills overlooking Pitts Key with a view of the reefs. I couldn’t think of a better place. Three weeks later I started building this house.

Now every morning when I get up and look outside, I see a new day dawning over the reef that gave me the opportunity to get a new start. And although Pitts Key isn’t the most fashionable place on the island, I’m lucky enough to witness a metaphor of my life every morning!

Chapter Three

* * * *

Alfonso

Nineteen-sixteen was a tumultuous year for Mexico, and it was an even more tumultuous year for my pal, Alfonso Sanchez.

Back then you couldn't get all the factions of the Mexican Revolution to agree where to have lunch, let alone how to run a revolution. But Venustiano Carranza⁽¹⁾ did get them to agree to a new formal constitution. The only other thing to which everyone agreed was the notion of putting Alfonso up against a wall as target practice for a firing squad, which was the fashion of the times.

At eight o'clock on the morning of November 18, 1916, two significant events occurred. Carranza left the National Palace in Mexico City for a daylong journey to Queretaro where the constitutional convention would forge a new beginning for Mexico. And Alfonso Sanchez also left Mexico City for a longer journey to the port of Veracruz, no less interested in a new beginning, or at least hoping to avoid an extremely sudden ending.

You see, in addition to having crossed nearly every faction in the Revolution, Alfonso, in typical style for him, was being pursued by two ex-wives, several outraged husbands, a small army of bill collectors and more loan sharks than there are stars on Old Glory. Alfonso, being Alfonso, did the only honorable thing he could. He got out of town while the getting was good.

Now when I say Alfonso was running on fumes, I know what I'm talking about. He didn't have a peso to his name, yet somehow he managed to con his way to Veracruz. He arrived at the great port with literally no money in his pocket and no possessions other than the rather dandy suit and boots he was wearing. This deplorable state of affairs would have depressed anyone else, but not Alfonso. He was the perennial optimist and one of those survivors who can always find a silver lining no matter how dark the cloud.

Alfonso, who was not without considerable charm, managed to find out from the harbor master that the Wharton steamship *Star of Antigua* was preparing to depart for Kingston, Jamaica. So just before noon on November 22, Alfonso Sanchez, who was 31 years old, in desperate trouble, and flat broke, strode across the gangplank of the *Star of Antigua* and demanded to speak to the captain. A short fireplug of a man who'd obviously seen more than his share of barroom brawls, the captain eyed Alfonso suspiciously.

"I'm sorry to inform you the Revolutionary Committee cannot allow this vessel to disembark Veracruz at this time. Not only have we found irregularities in your manifest, but you appear to be carrying contraband, *senor*."

"What are you talking about?" the captain barked. "I'm taking silver to Kingston. The harbor master says all of my papers are fine. Now get off my ship."

At that, several seedy looking sailors took a step or two closer to Alfonso. One of this "honor guard" had MOTHER tattooed on his forearm, Alfonso later claimed. Undaunted, Alfonso immediately presented the captain with an impressive set of documents and proceeded to explain, since no one among the crew read Spanish, that he was a personal representative of *Senor Carranza* and, as such, far outranked a humble harbor master.

"This is nuts," the captain spat. "I gotta stay on schedule. They're expecting this silver in Kingston in four days."

"Well, possibly if you were agreeable to paying a modest processing fee of, say, five hundred U.S. dollars, I could arrange for your immediate departure," Alfonso bargained.

“Five hundred dollars? Are you crazy? Good god! I’ll leave any damn time I want, and how the hell are you going to stop me?” snarled the fireplug.

I swear Alfonso was born under a lucky star, because at that moment a column of Revolutionary soldiers came marching down the wharf led by a bedraggled lieutenant.

“Ah,” said Alfonso, “if that’s how you feel, I shall simply turn this matter over to my comrades. It does seem a shame, however, that we have to impound this ship. To say nothing of the fact that spending a few years in a Mexican prison might not be the most pleasant experience for you and your crew. But that is your decision, *senor*.”

“Wait a minute. Wait a minute,” the captain replied. “I’ll have to get approval from Mr. Wharton to pay this ‘fee’ of yours. That could take a couple of days, given the conditions of the telegraph lines here.”

“Well, I’m afraid, *senor*, that will not be acceptable. You wish to depart today? I am offering you the opportunity to pay a modest fee to speed you on your way. I repeat, the decision is yours.”

Alfonso turned on his heel, retreated down the gangplank and walked crisply toward the soldiers who were shuffling their way up the wharf. As they approached, Alfonso said to the lieutenant in a voice loud enough to be heard on the decks of the *Star of Antigua*, “Lieutenant, if you don’t mind, a word with you.”

The column stopped and Alfonso, acting for all the world like he owned the place, motioned the lieutenant over to the side. For several moments they spoke in hushed tones, then Alfonso took a document from his pocket and handed it to the young officer, who looked at it briefly and smartly saluted Alfonso. They shook hands, and Alfonso strode back aboard the *Star of Antigua*, where Captain Fireplug reluctantly handed him five hundred American dollars in cash.

What the captain thought he saw in fact was quite different from what really happened. Alfonso, after stopping the column of soldiers, had pulled the lieutenant aside to say how much he admired the Revolutionary soldiers, how he had been one himself and had ridden with Zapata. He said he was now a prosperous ship owner and businessman who would be proud to have the lieutenant and his men as his guests for lunch today at the new restaurant he had just opened in town. It would be his small way of saying “thank you” to his comrades-in-arms. With that, he had reached into his pocket and handed the lieutenant a flyer he’d been given a few hours earlier by a fellow on the street, advertising a new restaurant opening that day in downtown Veracruz. Naturally, all the food and tequila was on Alfonso.

“That is most generous of you, *senor*,” the lieutenant had said.

“No. No, not at all. Nothing is too good for the men I fought with shoulder-to-shoulder in the Revolution,” Alfonso had testified.

To which the lieutenant had snapped a salute, Alfonso had said, “*Viva la Revolution*,” and they had shaken hands and departed.

The lieutenant and his men soon learned there’s no such thing as a free lunch.

Now, with five hundred dollars in his pocket, all that remained for Alfonso was to get out of Mexico. Jamaica seemed as good a destination as any.

“Captain, there remains one minor problem.”

“Oh? What’s that?”

“Well, the lieutenant informed me a Mexican warship is patrolling the area between here and Jamaica. I would not want anything to happen to you and your crew, now that you have proven so supportive of the Revolution. So what I propose is this...”

We’ll never know why the captain didn’t have Alfonso hit over the head with a blackjack, and search his pockets to see those documents he was flashing about, like any other tramp steamer captain would. But four days later, Alfonso, now dressed in sailor garb and carrying his fancy suit and boots in a small bag, arrived in Kingston, Jamaica. As he disembarked, he threw the captain a

crisp nautical salute and said, “God speed you on your journey, sir. I’m happy that I could provide you with safe passage to your destination. If you are ever in Mexico City, please don’t hesitate to call on me. You do remember the name of my *hacienda*.”

“Sure. Sure,” the captain responded. “It’s Chapultepec Castle.”⁽²⁾

On the passage to Jamaica, Alfonso heard of San Felipe for the first time. A small island, which then had a population of about 400 people, primarily descendants of pirates, drifters and couple of folks like Alfonso who were on the run from god knows what. Tramp steamers occasionally called on the place, trading whatever they had for fish the people of San Felipe caught and for goat cheese, which was the island’s cash crop, so to speak. As far as Alfonso was concerned, the best part was that nobody really was in charge.

The Spanish had discovered the island in 1501 and, as was their practice, they deposited several goats and pigs on the island as a food source if they should return. But they never came back, and the captain never properly or fully entered his discovery in the ship’s log. From 1610 to 1614 there was a modest settlement by the crew of a French mercantile expedition, who apparently didn’t even realize where they were. These wayward French soon vanished and never returned. And that’s pretty much how things stood – a totally undeveloped island populated by descendants of pirates, whose main contact with the outside world was selling goat cheese and fish.

“That’s for me,” thought Alfonso. It sounded like paradise. So he sniffed around, finally found a ship that was planning a stop at San Felipe to pick up some goat cheese, and bought himself a one-way passage, plus some clothes and accessories and a knapsack to carry it all.

On January 13, 1917, Alfonso Sanchez arrived at what would be his home for the next 47 years. Any of us would have had grave misgivings about the situation in which Alfonso found himself. But where others saw despair, he saw opportunity. In 1917, San Felipe was a mess. It had no electricity, no roads, no running water. The people lived in the most primitive of shacks. Disputes were solved through fists or firearms. The main occupation aside from fishing and goat herding – and the goats were everywhere – was the pursuit of unconsciousness through the consumption of rum.

But in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. And Alfonso, with almost three hundred dollars in his pocket, found himself in the unlikely role of richest man in town. So he went to work getting everyone in line and shaping up San Felipe. First he moved into an abandoned shack. Nobody said anything, so why not? Then he introduced himself to everyone and let it be known he had money to lend the good citizens of San Felipe. Even in San Felipe, you see, people needed money.

Alfonso’s loans weren’t exactly made at prime rate. In fact, if he’d done this in New York, he’d have been indicted, but it was San Felipe and if some poor goat herder needed some money to tide him over until the next ship came in to buy his cheese, well, what’s a few percentage points among friends?

Not everyone on the island appreciated Alfonso’s enthusiasm for a free market economy, but one group who did was the Patel family. There were about a dozen of ‘em and they’d arrived in San Felipe from Madras, India, about eight years earlier. They ran the only store in town and they sold everything: rum, food, clothes, tools, you name it. They were hard workers. Still are for that matter. Mr. Patel would open every morning at 7 o’clock and close every night at 11, seven days a week. He liked Alfonso because now his customers had money and he didn’t have to extend them credit until the next merchant ship docked in San Felipe Bay.

Alfonso also took a real interest in the welfare of San Felipe. He was fascinated with the place. Up until Alfonso arrived there was no map of San Felipe; so he hoofed his way all over the

island and drew one. He also started recording the island's history, something that had never occurred to anyone during the previous 400-plus years. After awhile Alfonso had the place running the way he thought it should.

In 1919 he took the biggest step of his life. He opened Alfonso's Beach Shack. Today's Alfonso's has no resemblance to the original one, except for the location. The first Alfonso's was indeed a shack consisting of a small bar, some stools, a few tables and a roof made of palm leaves. Alfonso just served rum, 'cause that was the easiest thing to get off the trading ships. The bill of fare included tortilla chips, which he made in a little back room, served with guacamole dip, which he invented⁽³⁾.

Alfonso had found an enormous grove of avocado trees on the southeast section of the island near Mundo Grande. At that time only three or four families lived there, and they were far more interested in goat herding than avocado harvesting. If someone wanted to buy some avocados, they'd sell 'em, but there wasn't much call for avocados. Once again, though, Alfonso's optimism paid off. Where others saw a modest green fruit, Alfonso saw a gold mine.

Getting to Mundo Grande wasn't easy, and the residents weren't too friendly. Still aren't today. But Alfonso had been there before on several occasions as he was mapping the island and had made friends with the goat herders. He'd bought a few of their avocados and taken them back to San Felipe, mashed 'em up with some cilantro, lime and tomatoes and – voila – found out they were pretty good with chips. After opening Alfonso's Beach Shack he started serving them along with chips as a complimentary treat to the patrons.

As he had correctly figured, Alfonso's was an immediate hit. It was the only bar in town. Alfonso's clientele wasn't limited to the local population. Now that there was somewhere to go, the tramp freighters would stay a little longer and their crews would come in to "splice the main brace"⁽⁴⁾ at Alfonso's and rave about the strange combination he served – tortilla chips and avocado dip, which he called guacamole.

It soon became a must-stop on the tramp steamer circuit. And it wasn't long before Alfonso was selling jars of guacamole dip to sailors from all over the Caribbean, along with every imaginable type of rum concoction and sloe gin fizzes, which became his other specialty. After a few years Alfonso had become so well known among the Caribbean shipping trade that no self-respecting tramp steamer would pass up the opportunity to buy some goat cheese and drop in at Alfonso's for a sloe gin fizz and the free chips and guacamole dip. So, in a modest way, Alfonso not only got San Felipe turned around, he also began the island's tourist trade.

By 1926 Alfonso had the place totally clocked. The population was growing and Alfonso had become the de facto leader of the whole island, which by that time had doubled in population to more than 800 people. So in 1926 he built the Alfonso's Beach Shack you see today. It had everything, including a gas-powered generator, producing the first electricity on the island, which became such a sensation Alfonso soon started selling his excess electrical capacity to other merchants in the town. The next thing you knew, Alfonso was selling electricity to the whole island, bringing in more and bigger generators. Soon after that he somehow convinced International Telephone and Telegraph, who at the time ran the Cuban telephone company, to string an underwater cable from Cuba to San Felipe.⁽⁵⁾ Naturally, the first telephone on San Felipe was installed at Alfonso's in 1930.

The other significant thing that happened to Alfonso in 1930 was the birth of his only child, a boy, also named Alfonso. Not Alfonso Junior or Alfonso II. Just Alfonso. Everyone on the island referred to him as Alfonso the Younger up until the old man's death in 1964, at which time Alfonso the Younger became simply Alfonso. As you saw in the photographs, Alfonso grew up to look exactly like his father. It's eerie. If I didn't know better, I would swear the father and son were one and the same. More than just looking alike, you understand. The son has the same speech patterns,

humor, charm and attitudes about life that his father did. So, even though I miss Alfonso, in a strange sort of way he's still here.

I never met the mother, and Alfonso never talked about her, but she was quite young when Alfonso married her and apparently never adjusted to Alfonso's lifelong interest in the fairer sex. About 1937 she left San Felipe for parts unknown, leaving Alfonso to raise Alfonso, and that was it. Alfonso spent the rest of his life teaching his son everything he knew, including the lesson that chasing women is infinitely more interesting than actually catching them – on a permanent basis anyway – at least that's how Alfonso and Alfonso see it and saw it.

By the time I arrived in 1940, Alfonso's Beach Shack was the capitol of the island, and Alfonso was the man to see about practically anything. As an outgrowth of his fascination with San Felipe, he became the informal repository of records. He noted all changes in the population – comings and goings, births and deaths. He knew every square inch of the island like no one else; so people would come to him to settle disputes. To this day we don't have anything like a legal system of property titles. We've never needed one with Alfonso, then his son, to settle property disputes.

It was also Alfonso's idea to get Mr. Patel and the other local merchants to chip in a few dollars a month to hire a constable, not that there's any crime to speak of. Hell, I haven't locked my doors in the 46 years I've been here. But Alfonso thought it would be prudent to have some form of police authority, mainly to keep an eye on visitors and make sure the drunks got home safely. Truth is, that's the guy's main job. When I came here there was one constable and he rode a bicycle. Today there's still one constable. Not the same fella, of course, and instead of a bike, he has a World War II army surplus Willis Jeep.

Things became a little more formalized in 1941 with the arrival of Father Joe. He's the red-faced fella you probably saw in the bar at Alfonso's with a Bloody Mary. He arrived here from Chicago to establish the first Catholic Church. He started recording births and deaths of Catholics here. Alfonso convinced him – and believe me, it wasn't hard; all it took was a couple of sloe gin fizzes – to expand his recording of births and deaths and passages to everyone on the island, not just Catholics.

Father Joe's pretty much of a gasbag, as you may have discovered by now. Always predicting calamity and spouting off uninformed opinions as if they're facts. Frankly, he's a real bore, but Alfonso found him useful to take over the record-keeping chores. Well, turns out Father Joe ain't really a father. According to Alfonso, he'd been defrocked in 1938. Something to do with a misunderstanding about an altar boy. So Father Joe showed up here to kind of start over again, as an awful lot of folks have.

When Jack was on his first visit to San Felipe in 1949, we bumped into Father Joe at Alfonso's and I introduced Jack as Congressman Kennedy to Father Joe. The next day I saw Father Joe, who again displayed all the wit that I'd come to expect from him. "Your young friend – they call him the Congressman? What kind of nickname is that?"

"Well, don't worry about it, Joe," I said. "Maybe someday you can call him Mr. President."

Father Joe couldn't contain his laughter. "That guy couldn't get elected dog catcher," he proclaimed pompously. "Number one, he's a loser. And number two, to run for public office requires a heck of a lot of money, which he obviously doesn't have."

From then on during Jack's frequent visits to the island, he and I would take elaborate precautions to minimize our risk of bumping into Father Joe. We weren't always successful, and I honestly think Father Joe didn't realize on one occasion he was actually talking to the President of the United States. Be that as it may, Alfonso tolerated him, because he did so many of the little things Alfonso had no interest in doing himself.

What else can I tell you about Alfonso? He was one helluva guy. An important and powerful man. He even played golf with the President. But if you really want to understand the

essence of Alfonso, then I suggest you look up the poem, "If," by Rudyard Kipling. For my money, nothing describes Alfonso Sanchez better.⁽⁶⁾

Chapter Four

* * * *

Caribe's

When I say Caribe's doesn't deliver, I know what I'm talking about. October 20, 1962, was a Saturday. I was just relaxing down at Alfonso's when I received an urgent call from an old friend in Washington.

"J3, I need a favor," said the familiar voice. "You're the only American who can still get in and out of Cuba. I want you to fly to Havana, go to Caribe's, pick up a package and bring it to me personally. They're expecting you. I can't emphasize how important this is."

That's a lot of flying in a seaplane, and it wasn't gonna be as easy as he made it sound. But I never said no to him. I figured something big must be up. So off I flew to a Cuba-in-turmoil. I secured four large cartons at Caribe's, high-tailed it out of the Plaza Vieja district, flew out real low, and arrived at 1:30 in the afternoon on October 22.

When I walked in, he looked pretty tired, but he flashed me a smile and asked, "Did you get it, J3?"

"You bet, Mr. President."

Two hours later, Jack Kennedy ordered the blockade of Cuba. What was in the boxes? The last batch of Cuban cigars to enter the U.S. "legally" since 1962.

Being asked to fly to Cuba and do this favor for Jack didn't amaze me as much as the fact that, at 80 years of age, Charlie Grutwilder was still dealing directly with the President of the United States from the back room at Caribe's. Hell, I don't suppose it should have surprised me. Jack was the fourth U.S. President that Charlie worked with. Old Charlie was a genuine original. When they made him, they threw away the mold.

Charlie was born in Houston in 1882. He was related on his mother's side to the legendary Jim Bowie⁽¹⁾, one of the heroes of the Alamo. Charlie's family was well-fixed to say the least, having made a Texas fortune the old fashioned way: cattle and crude.

Charlie went to Yale and studied European history. After graduating in 1904 he was at loose ends and decided that, rather than go back to Texas right away and punch cows, he'd like to spend a little time in New York City. So he enrolled in Columbia Law School. Now if Charlie had spent a little more time with Blackstone⁽²⁾ and a little less time with Bushmills, he might have been a hell of a lawyer. Nonetheless, Charlie's decision to go to law school completely changed his life.

He just barely graduated from Columbia, but in the process he began lifelong friendships with two other members of the class of '07 – William J. Donovan and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In fact, the three of them were so close that Charlie and Wild Bill were among a very select delegation from the class of 1907 that went to Warm Springs, Georgia, in January of 1933 to celebrate then President-elect FDR's 51st birthday.

Now when I say Charlie writ life large, I know what I'm talking about. If there ever was a hail-fellow-well-met it was Charlie. He had his first sexual experience when he was 15 years old with a prostitute in the Mexican border town of Matamoros. Charlie used to say it was the most significant event of his early life, because it gave him a lifelong mission. For Charlie, it was better than finding a burning bush on the top of Mt. Sinai, and he only had to climb one flight of steps to find it.

Charlie said he felt sorry for most people, because they didn't have a calling in life. Well, Charlie did and, unlike what often happens in other people's callings, Charlie never wavered from

his. Yes sir, old Charlie Grutwilder was a zealot in the pursuit of women right up until the day he died, which was November 9, 1964.

Even though Charlie was 82 when he passed away, Lyndon wanted to make sure no foul play was involved, because Charlie was one of the only contacts the U.S. government had in Cuba at the time.⁽³⁾ After a highly secret and surreptitious investigation by the C.I.A., the classified report concluded that Charlie “died in bed of natural causes, but he didn’t die alone.”

After graduation from law school in 1907, Charlie went back to Houston, hung out his shingle and started practicing law. It bored him to tears. Charlie was a smart man and a good lawyer, but as you can see he was easily distracted. Rather than engaging in the tedium of a legal brief, Charlie much preferred drinking and carousing and whoring around with his cronies. But the older Charlie got, the harder it got to find cronies who wanted to share in Charlie’s crusade. They were getting married, having children and becoming upstanding members of the community.

Money wasn’t a problem for Charlie. He’d inherited a pretty substantial hunk of wealth, thanks to cattle and crude, and he was making a pretty good buck as an attorney doing contract work for the oil companies. No, money wasn’t Charlie’s problem. Boredom was. Whoever said idle hands are the devil’s workshop must’ve had Charlie in mind. Fortunately for Charlie, that was all gonna change. In 1935, at the age of 53, Charlie Grutwilder finally found his true vocation.

Nineteen-thirty-five was an amazing year in several respects. It was a year that saw Germany repudiate the Versailles Treaty, incorporate Saar and introduce compulsory military service.⁽⁴⁾ Mussolini invaded Ethiopia⁽⁵⁾, and the Kingfish, Huey P. Long, was assassinated in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.⁽⁶⁾ Roosevelt started the second phase of the New Deal⁽⁷⁾, in which he called for social security, better housing, equitable taxation and farm assistance.

It was also the year that Roosevelt sent William J. Donovan to Italy to meet privately with Mussolini, which started Donovan⁽⁸⁾ on the road to becoming a cloak-and-dagger legend extraordinaire.

And it was the year that FDR asked Charlie Grutwilder to stop practicing law in Houston and move full time to Havana, to keep an eye on Batista’s new regime and the organized crime elements from the United States that were flocking to Cuba like pigeons to popcorn.⁽⁹⁾ Charlie leaped at the opportunity, and for the next 29 years, unbeknownst to all but a few of the highest officials of the United States government, Charlie Grutwilder was our man in Havana.

With his role as proprietor of Caribe’s giving him the perfect front, Charlie’s mission was to report directly to the U.S. attorney general about organized crime in Cuba. He did so through ten attorneys general, starting with Homer S. Cummings⁽¹⁰⁾ and concluding with Bobby Kennedy. But over the years, Charlie’s mandate increased in scope and size. Who better than Charlie – a drinking buddy of virtually everyone in Havana – to monitor Nazi and Fascist activity in the Caribbean? There was a lot to monitor during the war. Yeah, who better than Charlie? First reporting to Roosevelt personally, then to Bill Donovan when Wild Bill ran the O.S.S., which was a precursor to the C.I.A.

Charlie just loved it. Thanks to the generous support of the U.S. Treasury Department, Charlie could use his unique and prodigious talents to their maximum effect.

As far as Charlie was concerned, the beauty part was nobody in Washington ever asked him to file an expense report, and whenever he asked for another wheelbarrow full of money – which was often – they’d send it to him, no questions asked. The reason they’d send money whenever he asked was because Charlie was one of the most effective intelligence operatives in the history of the United States.

Charlie was on drinking and deal-making terms with everybody who mattered in freewheeling Batista Cuba. Crooked generals, corrupt government officials, mobsters, gun runners, pimps, loan sharks, you name it. Charlie knew 'em all and they used the services of Caribe's as the intermediary between their activities and cash. What they didn't realize is that for 29 years Charlie Grutwilder, hail-fellow-well-met to these folks, was reporting all of their activities to the U.S. federal government.

I first met Charlie in 1939 after resigning from Solomon & Co. and delivering my first shipment of men's linen suits to Havana. I figured Havana was just as good a place as any to base my operation, since I knew quite a few people there from previous trips as Mr. Solomon's representative.

Back in those days Charlie had three small studio apartments on the second floor of Caribe's that he'd rent to people looking for temporary housing. A fellow I knew in the Customs office mentioned to me one day that I might want to look up Charlie and talk to him about a place to live. That's how I came to meet Charles Bowie Grutwilder.

I showed up at Caribe's unannounced on December 19, 1939, at 10 o'clock in the morning. Charlie was standing behind the counter, or more exactly looming over it. Charlie was six-three and weighed in at a good two-hundred and fifty-five pounds. He wasn't nicknamed "El Toro" for nothing, you know.

He was sipping on his usual morning rum and Coke. I walked over to the counter and asked, "Are you Charlie Grutwilder?"

"You bet, boy," Charlie boomed. "What you need? You buyin' or sellin' today, son?"

"Well, actually I'm looking for a place to live, and Juan Martinez mentioned that you might have a furnished studio apartment to rent here."

"Well, now that all depends. I have a reputation for probity to maintain; so I'm mighty careful who all I have living here. Now tell me true. Are you on the run from the law or anything like that?"

"Hell, no, and if I was, what makes you think I'd tell you?"

Charlie bellowed one of those great laughs of his. "Hell, it never hurts to ask, boy. You never know what someone might tell you."

I laughed, too, and found myself immediately liking this mountain of a man with his booming voice and unpretentious airs.

"So, boy, tell me about yourself, and we'll see if we can lather it up and shave it."

That afternoon I moved into the small apartment above Caribe's that was to be my home for the next two years. Charlie turned out to be a most unconventional landlord. I was paying him \$25 a month in rent, and Charlie never gave a tinker's dam if I was late with my payment, which in those days was often. He encouraged me with Caribbean Traders, introduced me around to people, and helped me get a deal or two.

It was Charlie who started calling me J3. When I told him my name was J. Jeremiah III, Charlie had whistled, "Damn, that's a mouthful. I'm gonna call you J3."

Charlie's also the one who steered me to the goat cheese in San Felipe, and it was from Charlie that I found out the real reason San Felipe was shrouded in secrecy and didn't appear on any maps.

“Truths! Do you think I could have created a free French government against the English and the Americans with truths? You make history with ambition, not with truths,” Charles de Gaulle once said.

You see, doctor, San Felipe is there on the maps all right, or at least it was on a lot of maps produced up until 1913. You simply made the classic mistake that others have made – you were looking for the wrong name.

The story Charlie told me was quite a fascinating one. In 1501 a Spanish man-o-war briefly stopped in San Felipe harbor and, as recorded, left behind a contingent of goats and pigs which would then reproduce. Upon their return, the Spanish would have a supply of food on the island.

For reasons that were never quite clear to anyone who went into this in-depth, the Spanish man-o-war captain, one Augusto Valdez de Carmen, did not properly and fully enter his discovery into the ship’s log. This was pretty damned irregular, because if nothing else the Spanish were copious record keepers. What he did say in the log – which by the way is still in the archives in Granada, Spain, where all of the records of the Spanish exploration of the New World are kept – was that he and his crew stopped at an island called Mundo Grande, and that the island had nothing to recommend it. There appeared to be no natural resources or treasure, and it was too mountainous to be used for planting crops.

Charlie’s people in the O.S.S. speculated that Captain de Carmen, for whatever reasons, omitted in the official log the fact he had discovered Mundo Grande and had so named it. To the bureaucrats and dons back in Granada, it appeared de Carmen had simply visited an already discovered island. Because of his negative report, no further action was taken by anyone in the Spanish colonial administration.

This may sound a little improbable to you, but Mundo Grande is not the only island that was entered incorrectly into the then-official logs. It happened to two or three other islands here in the Caribbean and a handful some years later in the South Pacific. Remember, map-making was an inexact science at that time, and the bureaucrats in Granada, though vast in number, were not necessarily all that competent.

In 1610, a French mercantile colony was briefly established, but they departed in 1614. They also called the island Mundo Grande based on finding a large boulder which had been carved in Spanish with the name Mundo Grande and the year 1501. Because of that and the pigs and goats, the French assumed they were simply squatters on a Spanish possession. After four years of futile efforts, the French moved on. Interestingly enough, it appears the French were the ones who originally planted the avocado grove near today’s village of Mundo Grande.

After the French departed, the island just sat here unoccupied until around 1750 or so, when a band of pirates from Jamaica, who were on the run from the British, moved here. Rather than settling on the bay, they moved to Mundo Grande, which gave them a tremendous natural-built fortress high above the Caribbean. Mundo Grande is the highest point on the island.

That’s pretty much how things stood for the next hundred and fifty years. The population grew slowly and the towns of San Felipe and Pitts Key started to evolve. The interesting anomaly here is that nobody ever claimed ownership or control over what today is the island of San Felipe.

For 400 years those maps that showed Mundo Grande were few and far between. According to Charlie and the guys at the O.S.S., each of the old maps showed Mundo Grande as a possession of somebody else. The French maps showed it as a Spanish possession. The Spanish maps identified it as British-owned. The British maps said the Dutch owned it. The Dutch had no idea who owned it, but they knew it wasn’t them. So it sat there unclaimed because, frankly, who wanted it? There was no mineral wealth, there was no potential for agriculture, and it served no strategic value in terms of location.

For more than 400 years, Mundo Grande simply fell through the bureaucratic cracks of virtually every world power. It was mentioned briefly at the Congress of Vienna in 1815⁽¹¹⁾, when

the great powers gathered after the Napoleonic wars to divvy up real estate and assign spheres of influence, but again a review of the records shows the Congress adjourned before insignificant Mundo Grande was disposed of, along with a couple of other islands in the world. Nobody wanted Mundo Grande. Things changed, however, in 1913.

Lindley M. Garrison was newly elected President Woodrow Wilson's secretary of war.⁽¹²⁾ Wilson took the Monroe Doctrine very seriously.⁽¹³⁾ He was concerned about the stability of the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America. As a result, Secretary Garrison ordered a complete review of the region from a strategic military standpoint. That review turned out to be prescient, because under Wilson the United States invaded Mexico, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and continued the presence of a Marine contingent in Nicaragua that had begun in 1909.

Although Garrison ordered the review, it was actually done by the then-assistant secretary of the navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In his later years as president, Roosevelt would warn of the evils of colonial possessions. But in 1913, FDR was an eager proponent of using America's military power to control the region. As assistant secretary of the navy, Roosevelt had so much power over Haiti that his friends used to call him the Emperor of Haiti. I'm not kidding. Well, it was Roosevelt's review that uncovered Mundo Grande, and the discovery went from Roosevelt to Garrison to Woodrow Wilson himself.

The Department of the Navy thought the U.S. should assert a territorial claim for Mundo Grande. Wilson opposed that idea for political reasons. Mundo Grande was of no strategic value to anyone; so Wilson ruled out the possibility of annexation because he didn't want it to appear that the United States was an expansionist colonial power. On the other hand, Wilson didn't want another piece of Caribbean real estate to fall into the hands of anyone else – the British, the French, the Dutch or the Spanish. So, with an audacity that was breathtaking in its scope, Woodrow Wilson ordered that henceforth Mundo Grande be removed from all maps and its existence be disavowed.

Roosevelt ordered the Navy to remove all reference to Mundo Grande on every map it could get its hands on. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan⁽¹⁴⁾ elicited like agreements from most of the world's powers. In 1919, in one of the many secret codicils of the League of Nations, its members agreed to the removal of Mundo Grande from all future maps. The island would serve as a neutral location for various governments to meet in secret, away from the prying eyes of the public or press.

Franklin Roosevelt, who was not without a mischievous sense of humor, code named the now-secret island "San Felipe" in honor of his Filipino steward, Felipe, who brought him coffee every morning in his office at the old Executive Office Building near the White House.⁽¹⁵⁾

"Why?" I remember asking Charlie on the evening of February 3, 1948, when he told me the real history of San Felipe. "Why would everyone go to the trouble to do this?"

"Well," drawled Charlie, "it wasn't all that hard to do and, hell, boy, it was in everybody's best interest, and that's the essence of a good deal."

It was also during that conversation at the Tropicana that Charlie suggested it might be a good idea to build a luxury hotel on San Felipe to properly accommodate certain V.I.P. guests. That's how Caribbean Traders Beach Club came to pass.

I told you we were doing pretty well money-wise at Caribbean Traders by then, but I didn't have the money necessary to build the type of hotel that Charlie had in mind.

“Charlie, no offense. It’s a great idea. I just ain’t got that kind of money, and after borrowing the money for the seaplane fleet I’m about as far in debt as I can go.”

“Hell, J3, money ain’t the problem. You just go ahead and start making some plans. Get the damn place built. There’s a need for a first-rate luxury hotel in San Felipe. Who knows? You might even make a profit off it.”

“Yeah, Charlie, but that still doesn’t answer the basic question of where the money’s gonna come from.”

“I’ll tell you what, J3,” said Charlie, leaning over the table where we were sitting at the Tropicana. “You get some land, you start building that hoot an’ hummer of a resort, and I guarantee within 30 days you’ll have a mortgage for 100 percent of your costs at very favorable terms. You got my word on that, partner.”

“Charlie, I don’t know. It’s a big risk.”

“Just do it, J3. Hell, you know you can trust me.”

And even though I knew nothing of the kind, I decided to take another one of the gambles I periodically have taken in my life, and did what Charlie said. Sure enough, in May of 1948, Davis Andrews called me from London wanting to know what he was supposed to do with the 3.2 million dollars that had been wired into his escrow account in my name.

To this day, I don’t know where the money came from, but Charlie sure as hell was right. If someone gives you enough money to build a luxury hotel and never asks you to repay it, to my way of thinking that’s a loan on very favorable terms.

So that’s why I don’t mind being a generous host at the beach club, covering the costs of government officials, politicians or ex-politicians who may be experiencing “temporary cash flow problems” and who need to get away for awhile for any number of reasons. And every so often to this day, a substantial amount of money will be wired to my account at Coots Bank, presumably by the same benefactor who paid for the hotel.

Last time I saw Charlie was in February of 1963. He’d come over from Havana and was staying in one of the presidential suites at the beach club with two comely young female associates of his that he’d brought along. Charlie, his friends and I had dinner at the beach club, and after we’d gone through a couple bottles of Taittinger and god-only-knows how many pounds of Beluga caviar, Charlie ordered all of us rack of lamb and for good measure a few bottles of 1945 Mouton Rothschild.

He lit up a big Cohiba cigar, winked at his two young companions and said to me, “J3, there’s two words that I just hat.” (“Hate” always came out sounding like “hat” when Charlie said it.)

“Oh, yeah, what are those, Charlie?” I laughed.

“Austere and penury,” he smiled.

Chapter Five

* * * *

Guatemala

When I say a good cigar could have changed history, I know what I'm talking about. I wish I'd had a good cigar with me on June 17, 1954. You see, Dwight Eisenhower and I were playing a friendly round of golf at Burning Tree that day, and old Ike managed to find every sand trap on the course. When he finally got on, he three- or four-putted every green.

We'd been talking about Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, president of Guatemala, and I kept telling Ike that Guzman was a little flaky, but was no commie, so no problem. But the more holes Ike played, the madder he got. He asked me if I had a cigar with me so he could calm down a bit, but as fate would have it I was plumb out! So by the 19th hole, Ike was positively sputtering. He paid off our friendly wager and, still sputtering, stormed off to make an urgent telephone call.

The next day the C.I.A. launched Operation P.B. Success, and that was it for Guzman. Who knows what might have happened if I only had one more good Caribbean Traders cigar. Which reminds me of old Fidel, but that's a story for another day...

That's always how it seemed to go with Ike and me. He'd ask my advice about something that was going on in the Caribbean or Latin America. I'd give it to him as honestly and evenhandedly as I could, and he usually ignored it. In spite of everything, though, like tens of millions of people around the world, I liked Ike.⁽¹⁾

Who I didn't like, based on my experience in Guatemala, was Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, Allen, who was then director of central intelligence.⁽²⁾ I also didn't like John Moors Cabot,⁽³⁾ the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, and Henry Cabot Lodge,⁽⁴⁾ who was the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. The death and destruction that has been a daily occurrence in Guatemala for over thirty years⁽⁵⁾ now can be laid directly at the doorstep of these four characters and the incredibly bad advice they gave Ike.

If they hadn't been so concerned about their own selfish interests in the United Fruit Company, things probably would've turned out differently in Guatemala, and tens of thousands of people's lives would've been spared. But when you combine greed with a bunch of paranoids who saw Communists under every bed and behind every potted palm, and when these nuts have access to the President of the United States, well, the poor people of Guatemala never had a chance.

Now if I'd followed Alfonso's advice back in 1952, I never would've been as deeply involved in Guatemala as I became, and I would've saved myself a lot of trouble and a night in jail. But I didn't.

"J3, why in the hell do you want a coffee plantation in Guatemala?" Alfonso asked, lifting his hands and eyes toward the heavens. "The place is a total mess and, mark my words, it's not gonna get any better with that nut Jacobo Arbenz⁽⁶⁾ running the show."

It was a beautiful February evening in 1952, and Alfonso and I were sitting on the terrace of the Do Drop Inn overlooking the north end of San Felipe Bay. With my feet up on the railing, sipping on a Pimm's Cup and smoking a Monte Cristo No. 5, I didn't have a care in the world, and I sure didn't want Alfonso nagging me about what I was certain was a terrific proposition.

“Look, Alfonso, how often do you have the opportunity to acquire a world class coffee plantation under such favorable terms? The climate and the soil in Antigua produce some of the best coffee in the world. If I buy Don Padrone’s plantation and invest a few extra bucks to increase production, I’ll be able to sell ten times the amount of San Felipe Supremo that we do now. As it is, I can’t get more than a small portion of Don Padrone’s production, which doesn’t come close to satisfying demand. Why, this deal pays for itself in no time.”

“And why is Don Padrone so anxious to sell his plantation to you on such generous terms?” Alfonso asked, puffing out a smoke ring from his Cohiba.

“Because he’s tired, Alfonso. The poor guy has spent six years cleaning up some messy problems that he’d left behind, and building up his plantation. Now he wants to cash out, and get away from the risk and the turmoil. He’s bought a small farm in Ocotal in Nicaragua right on the Honduras border, and he’s kind of anticipating a peaceful, quiet retirement.”⁽⁷⁾

“It wouldn’t be that he’s kind of anticipating his plantation might be expropriated, would it?” asked Alfonso, raising his eyebrows.

“Come on, Alfonso. Guzman isn’t interested in coffee plantations. He’s just trying to break United Fruit’s stranglehold over his country’s economy.”

“I don’t know, J3. That Salvadoran wife of his, Maria, is a Communist. He’s got himself a bunch of Communist advisors, and the government press keeps publishing columns supporting North Korea.⁽⁸⁾ He’s an alcoholic and rumored to be a drug addict. Other than all of that, he’s a hell of a leader. Oh, and don’t forget, he legalized the Communist Party in Guatemala. Yeah, J3, this sure is the horse to bet on.”

“It’s not that bad, Alfonso. Guzman is basically a nationalist. You’d be pretty pissed off, too, if you had United Fruit here in San Felipe. You know, they don’t call it the Octopus for nothing. They own the electric company, the port at Puerto Barrios, the railroad and, at their peak, over five hundred thousand acres of land, of which they use less than ninety thousand acres. Guzman always has talked about trying to redistribute wealth by broadening a capitalist-based economy. He just doesn’t want it dominated by foreign companies and certainly not by a monopoly like United Fruit. Can you blame him?”

“Yes, but stealing land is stealing land, my friend.”

“Come on, Alfonso, he’s not stealing land. He’s expropriated property that’s been sitting there idle, not producing anything, and given it to Indian peasants who don’t own any land. And he’s always paid fair market value for the property.”

“Yes, but what about the four hundred thousand acres of United Fruit’s property that he stole from them?”

“Alfonso, I’m gonna tell you one last time. He didn’t steal it. Under the Guatemalan constitution and laws, he had the absolute right to expropriate that land. It’s allowed more than forty thousand Indian peasant families to start small subsistence farms and co-ops, so they can at least try to feed themselves for a change. Remember, United Fruit isn’t gonna create any jobs for these people. The few jobs they do create, they exploit the hell out of people, paying literally pennies an hour. The small amount of good United Fruit does is more than offset by the evil and exploitation they engage in.”

“Possibly, J3, but Arbenz only offered a fraction of what the property is worth.”

“Alfonso, that’s not true. He offered United Fruit one million two hundred thousand dollars for the property. That was their own valuation – at least that’s what they told the Guatemalan tax authorities the land was worth. Now they say they didn’t really mean it, and they want almost sixteen million for non-producing land that for all intents and purposes is worthless to them or anyone else, except the Indian families, and then only for subsistence farming. No, Alfonso, either way they’ve lied. Either they’ve lied and been engaged in tax fraud for decades, or they’re lying about the value of the land now, hoping to make an outlandish profit at the expense of a poor nation.”

And it was then and there, looking down from the Do Drop Inn at the twinkling lights of the peer, I decided to take up Don Padrone on his offer and buy the coffee plantation.

On January 20, 1953, General Dwight David Eisenhower was inaugurated as President of the United States.⁽⁹⁾ It was a tumultuous and historic time, with the Cold War dominating world events. I didn't know Eisenhower all that well. I first met him in 1949 when he was president of Columbia University. I'd been invited by some academic types to participate in a panel discussion on where the Caribbean might be headed. Afterwards, Ike hosted a small reception at his official residence. We kind of hit it off and chatted about world events, and he flattered me by saying he'd been impressed by a couple of points I'd made in the discussion. After that, we corresponded occasionally.

In December of 1950 President Truman recalled Ike to active duty to command the North Atlantic Treaty Organization,⁽¹⁰⁾ and he and I continued to exchange letters and cards. I even visited him briefly on one occasion at NATO headquarters. But beyond that, we weren't anything other than acquaintances. He resigned from NATO in May of 1952 to return to the United States and run for president on the Republican ticket. It was pretty much of a foregone conclusion he was gonna win – and win handily – over Adlai E. Stevenson, governor of Illinois.⁽¹¹⁾

After he became President we continued to keep up our infrequent communications. Now and then he'd ask me to drop in on him in Washington to give my opinions on some subject.

Back in Guatemala things were going from bad to worse, and Ike's thought process was being influenced by the Dulles brothers, Henry Cabot Lodge and John Moors Cabot. All four of 'em had it in for Guzman, because they all had strong financial ties to United Fruit. Foster Dulles and Allen both had been partners in the law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell, which was United Fruit's main legal counsel. John Moors Cabot's family were major shareholders in the company, which shouldn't be surprising given the fact his brother had been president of it. The largest single shareholder of the whole crowd was Cabot Lodge, who personally owned a fortune in United Fruit stock. As I say, Guatemala never had a chance.

Well, the four of 'em were just itching for an excuse to have the C.I.A. overthrow old Jacobo. The C.I.A. organized a rag-tag group of less than five hundred men, gave them the glorious name of the National Liberation Army – or MLN – and chose as their leader a retired army colonel, Carlos Castillo Armas, who was living in Honduras and – I'm not making this up – working as a furniture salesman.

Now if Guzman hadn't been such a flake, they'd have never pulled off Operation P.B. Success. But the way, P.B. are the initials the C.I.A. uses to identify Guatemala in its internal documents. No, they never would've succeeded, because as soon as Castillo Armas and his motley crew crossed the Honduran border on their glorious assault, the Guatemalan Army stopped them in their tracks after a very brief firefight.

A couple of things saved the day for the C.I.A. First of all, Guzman started hitting the bottle heavily as soon as he heard the phony C.I.A. radio broadcasts claiming victories for the fictitious MLN army in one imaginary battle after another on their march to the capital. Secondly, the C.I.A. had assembled a small air force, consisting of three World War II surplus planes, piloted by American spooks and flown out of Honduras to bomb the capital.

The Guatemalan air force panicked and refused to take on the surplus bombers, mistakenly believing the three old planes to be the vanguard of a whole armada. If they'd just attacked them, they could've blown 'em out of the sky in no time, and the whole sorry episode would've been over. Instead, Guzman went into exile and Castillo Armas, ex-furniture salesman, became president of Guatemala and the personal lap dog of John Peurifoy,⁽¹²⁾ the U.S. ambassador to Guatemala. In fact,

Castillo Armas arrived in Guatemala City for his triumphant reception aboard Peurifoy's personal airplane.

John Peurifoy was nuttier than a fruitcake, and thus the perfect man for the job. But he certainly was a colorful fruitcake. How many ambassadors do you know who would stroll around Guatemala City with a pair of six-shooters strapped to their legs like Wyatt Earp? I'm not kidding.

Well, needless to say, under the exalted leadership of this crowd, things kept getting worse in Guatemala. Under Castillo Armas's cruel regime – with the encouragement of the “gang of four” and United Fruit, and with John Peurifoy acting as mouthpiece and social conscience – thousands of peasants were forcibly removed from their land, daily wages dropped below the poverty level, food shortages ensued, and the unemployment rate went through the ceiling.

To punish the Indians for participating in the land reform movement, Castillo Armas had thousands of Indians imprisoned and hundreds killed. He disbanded labor unions and peasant councils. Over nine thousand people suspected of having leftist leanings were arrested and held without trial. He implemented a secret police apparatus that's still in effect today. Political prisoners were routinely tortured. At the insistence of the U.S. government and United Fruit, he created a “black list” of more than seventy thousand people who were active in unions. Eventually, the C.I.A. even set up military camps inside Guatemala to train anti-Castro insurgents.

After being put into power, Castillo Armas refused to disband his private army, the MLN. This infuriated the regular military's officers. So in August of 1954, a group of cadets from the Guatemalan military academy attacked and killed fifty members of the MLN. This gave Castillo Armas the excuse he needed to launch a countrywide crackdown on people who opposed him.

In late August of 1954, I was in Guatemala City for the annual meeting of the Guatemala Coffee Growers Association. Now, the members of the association – which really was a cooperative – were arguing the pros and cons of coffee export quotas. You can guess which side of that argument I was on. I felt then, as I always have and still do, that free trade should prevail. So I wasn't gonna miss an opportunity to argue with my fellow coffee growers against the evils of trade restrictions.

One afternoon I was walking west on *Calle 6* in front of the *Palacio Nacional*. I was just about ready to cut through the *Parque Central* to grab a quick lunch at the Pan American Hotel when a black Ford sedan screeched to a halt beside me and three mean-looking S.O.B.s jumped out and surrounded me.

“Mr. Jefferson, you will come with us, please,” said the meanest looking one, with a sneer.

“Well, before we go out on a date, maybe you'd like to tell me your name.”

“I am Lt. Cortina of the Internal Security Services,” he said in a flat, menacing voice.

“I see. Well look, lieutenant, thanks for the offer, but I'm sure I can make my way on foot. So if you don't mind, I'll just be off, since it's way past my lunch time.”

Suddenly one of the thugs standing behind me kicked the back of my left knee, and I started to fall. They grabbed my arms, pinning them behind my back, and someone pulled a wool hood over my head. The next thing I knew, I was in the back seat of the car speeding off to god-knows-where. After what seemed like hours, but in reality was probably ten minutes, the car abruptly stopped. They pushed me out of the back seat, up a flight of stairs, down a long concrete-floored corridor, and through a doorway where I was slammed into a chair. Someone removed the hood and, as my eyes adjusted, I saw that I was in a small, windowless room painted military gray, and facing a most unpleasant looking fella seated at a gray metal desk adorned only with a gray gooseneck lamp and a very thick manila folder.

“*Bienvenidos*, Mr. Jefferson. I am Col. Flores Gomez, and I am the adjunct commander of a special military unit known as the Jaguars. Our mission is to root out and deal with anti-government elements – Communists who would destroy our democratic institutions. Regrettably, Mr. Jefferson, your name continues to appear on our list as someone in whom we should take an interest.”

“Well, colonel, J. Jeremiah Jefferson the Third is a pretty common name, and I’m sure you’ve got me confused with another one. So if you don’t mind, I think I’ll just be on my way.”

Although I couldn’t see it, a hand firmly squeezed my left shoulder from behind me, freezing me in the wooden chair. Flores Gomez ignored me and made a production of thumbing through the papers in the file in front of him. Abruptly, he looked up at me.

“Did you refer to President Castillo Armas as an idiot two nights ago at a cocktail party held at the Guatemala Club?”

“No. No, sir, I did not.”

“You didn’t?”

“No. No, sir. I referred to Castillo Armas as a fucking idiot and an example of what happens when cousins intermarry too much.”

“Very amusing, Mr. Jefferson. Is it true that you are a member of the Communist Party?”

“Oh, for Christ sakes.”

“And that you and your fellow traveler, Don Padrone, are planning on using your coffee plantation as a safe house for Communist insurgents?”

“Colonel, let me ask you a question. Have you ever read *Through the Looking Glass*?”

“No.”

“Well, you ought to, because clearly you’re the Red Queen.”

When I came to, I found myself in a small cell about six feet by six feet. It was dark and it was damp and it was hot. There was no window and it seemed to be several feet below ground. The only illumination came from a small bare bulb in the ceiling of the cell and two or three more that I could see in the walkway. Looking through the bars I could see nothing but cinderblock wall. I had no idea what time it was, since my watch had been taken from me along with my gold signet pinky ring and everything in my pockets.

I’d be lying to you if I told you I wasn’t scared out of my mind. I was tired and hungry, and I had a splitting headache from the large lump on the back of my head where I’d been hit with a blackjack. There was no toilet or drain in the cell, and I found myself in the position of having to relieve myself in the corner. All in all, not a pleasant experience.

How long I was in the cell I have no idea. I would guess at least twelve hours, maybe longer. Eventually, two armed guards in military garb came into the cell to collect me. They said absolutely nothing as they escorted me down the long corridor and up three flights of stairs, down another long corridor and back into Flores Gomez’s office. He looked up at me from his desk, still illuminated only by the gooseneck lamp.

“Shall we try it again, Mr. Jefferson? Perhaps you have learned your lesson and will cooperate with us.”

As he said this, one of the goons threw me back onto the wooden chair and the other one held me with both of his hands on my shoulders. Suddenly, Flores Gomez reached into his file and produced several typed pages stapled together.

“I have prepared for you, Mr. Jefferson, a full confession of your Communist activities. I expect you to sign it, confessing your treasonous activities against the people of Guatemala.”

“Fuck you.”

“Very brave, Mr. Jefferson, and most admirable. But I assure you – you will sign this document.”

Before I could get out the second “fuck you,” the right side of my head exploded from the powerful blow of a blackjack, sending me reeling to my left off the chair. As I hit the floor, a steel-toed boot slammed with the force of a tornado into the small of my back, lifting me off the concrete

floor and moving me several inches forward. I looked up and saw Flores Gomez standing over me, an evil grin on his face as he lifted his booted foot over my right hand, which was sprawled in front of me.

“Godammit, what the hell’s goin’ on here?” I heard through the fog of pain. “Flores, are you fuckin’ crazy?” boomed a voice, echoing off the walls. “Fellas, take care of them two punks. J3, are you all right?”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m okay,” I smiled, now almost nose-to-nose with the bright, red face of Charles Bowie Grutwilder.

“Charlie, you’re a sight for sore eyes.”

“And you’re lucky that goddam sumbitch didn’t kill you, J3. But you’ll be all right from here on out. Trust me, boy. Everything is square.”

We were speeding out of Guatemala City back to my coffee plantation in Antigua. The three-car convoy carried Charlie, me and a dozen U.S. Army Rangers. As we roared through the Guatemala night, I turned to Charlie and asked him, “How’d you know where I was? How’d you find me?”

“Oh, hell, J3, that ain’t all that hard. When I heard Peurifoy had sold you down the river to Flores Gomez, it wasn’t hard to put two and two together and come up with eight.”

“Yeah, but Charlie, how did you know Peurifoy set me up?”

“Damn, J3, for a smart boy you sure are dumb. Don’t you know nobody trusts nobody in this business? Hell, we bug all the phones in the embassy and in his official residence.”

“Great, Charlie. Just great.”

“Don’t be a smart ass, J3. It sure as hell saved you from a very unpleasant set of circumstances.”

“I’ll grant you that, Charlie. And where did all your new-found pals come from, if you don’t mind my asking?”

“Hell, I don’t mind, J3. All these fine young men were sent here on the direct order of the President of United States. And that, boy, is why you ain’t never gonna have a problem ever again in Guatemala.”

“I see. One last question, Charlie. When you slammed Flores Gomez up against the wall, what was it you whispered in his ear?”

“Hell, boy, I just said if he ever pulled a stunt like this again, I’d personally see to it that he’d be singing alto with the Vienna Choir Boys.”

A couple of days later I was back in San Felipe. I was still limping a little as I walked into Alfonso’s.

“Ah, a plantation owner. Welcome, welcome,” said Alfonso as I settled myself at the bar.

“Alfonso, you know what Charlie Grutwilder told me was the first thing Castillo Armas did when he became president of Guatemala?”

“No, J3, what?”

“The first thing, the very first thing mind you, that he did was agree to pay United Fruit all of the money they wanted for their land – plus interest. And since the Guatemalan treasury was essentially broke when he took over, guess where the money came from.”

“The United States?”

“That’s right, in the form of foreign aid. So the Guatemalan government could pay the United Fruit Company, to the benefit of its major shareholders, who all work for the United States government. Amazing.”

“J3, I knew all that.”

“You did?”

“Sure. That and a lot of other dirty stuff about Castillo Armas, United Fruit and the whole sorry mess. Why do you think we don’t sell their stinking Chiquita brand fruits – especially their bananas – here on San Felipe?”

“You know what, Alfonso?” I smiled from ear to ear. “I think I’d like a drink.”

“A sloe gin fizz always goes well this time of day,” we both laughed together.

Chapter Six

* * * *

The First Mrs. J

“It’s an important work by an artist who is already exercising great influence in more sophisticated circles. Shall I price it for you?” asked the aristocratic voice.

It was one of those typically dreary November days in London. I was killing some time in Knightsbridge after a boring lunch with two British investment bankers. They had an anonymous client who wanted to take a modest equity position in Caribbean Traders. My answer would be a resounding “no,” which I already knew before I sat down for lunch. But it was London and you have to pretend you’re seriously entertaining their ideas, their proposition. Manners and style do count in some places. So I listened to their proposal and their bad jokes, which they thought were uproariously funny, and said I’d get back to them.

I decided to take a little stroll around Knightsbridge to clear my head. The weather matched my mood, but the fresh air served its purpose. That’s how I came to find myself in one of those galleries where the clientele has more money than taste. They take home overpriced art works to hang over their couches, where they and their equally pretentious friends pontificate on the artwork’s importance and the artist’s influence. Lord, deliver me.

“Well, as Ike says, ‘I don’t know much about art, but I know what I like,’⁽¹⁾ and this isn’t it,” I replied to the attractive woman with the courtly voice.

“Perhaps you’d like to look at something from a more classical school.”

“Actually, I just dropped in to browse a little and warm up. I’m afraid I’m not much of a collector.”

She had the rich looks to match the voice – perfectly coifed blonde hair, statuesque beauty and the austere manner exclusive to the gene pool of the British upper class. She was dressed tastefully in a perfectly tailored Chanel suit, accented by a string of what were obviously real and very expensive pearls. All in all a very smart looking woman with poise and style. As my London lawyer Davis Andrews would say, she was a good-looking tomato.

“I take it you’re visiting London?” she inquired.

“That’s right.”

“Is it your first visit?”

“Oh, no. I’ve been coming to London for more than 20 years.”

“Where in the States do you live?”

“Well, actually I don’t live in the States. I live on San Felipe down in the Caribbean.”

“Really. San Felipe.” She smiled.

“Do you know San Felipe?”

“Yes, of course. I visited there several years ago with my husband; well, my ex-husband.”

“No kidding. I hope you enjoyed it.”

“The island was very pleasant, but I’m afraid the results of the trip weren’t. Dickie was in the investment business, among other things. We went to San Felipe on a working vacation. Unfortunately, Dickie never had the best judgment when it came to people, and he ended up getting involved with one of the most disagreeable little men I’ve ever met. A chap by the name of Felix Wharton III. Do you know him?”

“I sure do,” I laughed. “And disagreeable would be the nicest thing I ever said about him. He’s quite a package, our Felix. Sorry you had such an unpleasant experience. Come down and visit again. By the way, I’m J. Jeremiah Jefferson,” I grinned, handing her one of my cards.

“Susan Baker-Campbell,” she said, extending her hand. “Charming to meet you, Mr. Jefferson.

“Please. Call me J3. Everyone does.”

“J3. What a curious name.”

“Well, it suits me fine,” I shrugged.

“Caribbean Traders,” she mused, considering my business card. “Of course. That’s the hotel where we stayed. It was bloody marvelous. The highlight of the trip. My compliments, sir. You must be the man to know in San Felipe.”

“Depends what you’re looking for. In any case,” I said, “let me know if you decide to give us a second chance, and I’ll handle all the arrangements for you. With any luck we can make your second visit a more rewarding experience than your first.”

We talked for a while, the kind of idle chat that people engage in when they’re first getting to know each other. Then some of the newly rich and vapid came in, and Susan Baker-Campbell had to attend to telling them about important works by emerging artists.

“Don’t forget,” I said as I prepared to leave, “if you’d like to visit San Felipe again, just let me know. I’m serious.”

“Thank you, J3. It was a pleasure meeting you.”

“The pleasure was all mine,” I replied as I walked out into a dreary London afternoon.

I left London the next day and spent the better part of the following three weeks traveling. First Bermuda, then Washington, Barbados, the Dominican Republic, and finally home to San Felipe. It was one of those extended trips I’d grown accustomed to over the years.

By the time I returned to my office, an enormous stack of mail greeted me. In the middle of the mountain of correspondence was a note from Susan Baker-Campbell, written on expensive personalized stationery with a very toney West End Belgravia return address.

“Well, well,” thought I as I learned she and a friend had decided to take a February vacation. She was taking me up on my offer to visit San Felipe, assuming the Caribbean Traders Beach Club had any rooms available during the season and, oh by the way, what were the rates? They hoped to arrive on February 5 and depart on the 15th. The woman who was joining her was her cousin, Mary Campbell-Stewart. “God, what is it with hyphens and the British?” I thought.

Of course we had rooms available. We always have rooms available. As you can see, the beach club is a small place – 52 junior suites, eight one-bedroom suites and two presidential suites. We could have 100 percent occupancy in the winter if we wanted, but I’ve always made it a practice to keep a half dozen rooms open, because I really never know who might be dropping in.

The hotel actually functions more as a fancy guesthouse for an extremely varied crowd of associates and friends. Some of them are temporarily short of funds or position, or both, and in need of a Caribbean escape. At the beach club they can lick their wounds in peace and plot their returns to the wars of commerce and industry or politics.

It was 8:30 in the evening in London, so I reached for the phone and placed a call to the number she’d written in the note. The phone rang and rang. I was about ready to hang up when suddenly I heard her unmistakable voice. I told her we had a room for her and her cousin, and I’d be delighted to have both of them over to my home for dinner, and to arrange for them to really get to know San Felipe.

“By the way, there’s additional good news for you,” I teased.

“Really, what’s that?”

“Seems that while I was gone, our mutual friend, Brother Wharton, was arrested while visiting Jamaica. Something to do with bad checks. So I doubt you’ll be seeing him on your visit. I hope you’re not disappointed.”

“Crestfallen,” she deadpanned.

We talked for about an hour, and when we hung up I decided her voice was more than aristocratic – it was charming. I called her a few more times between that call and her arrival in San Felipe. Each time I used the pretext of confirming details of the arrangements, but that was just an excuse. We’d have conversations lasting an hour, hour-and-a-half, each more pleasant than the one before. Frankly, I found myself enormously attracted to Susan Baker-Campbell. I enjoyed her humor and the gossip she was always dishing about society goings-on in London. It was fun. It’d been years since I’d flirted like this with a woman of such culture and pedigree, and I was enjoying myself. I think she was enjoying herself, too.

She and Mary Campbell-Stewart arrived as scheduled on February 5, 1960. Over the course of their ten-day visit, Susan and I drew increasingly close. We spent most of the time together. Mary concerned herself with relaxing and tanning at the private pool adjoining their presidential suite. I took Susan around exploring the island and introducing her to practically everyone.

In addition to exploring the island, we spent the time talking and learning about each other. Susan Baker-Campbell was 37 years old, had been divorced for four years from her husband Dickie, and to her great regret had no children.

It turned out I wasn’t wrong about the aristocratic part. Her father was a hereditary member of the House of Lords, and one hundred and sixty eighth in the line of succession to the throne, a fact that could only interest the British and one that only they would keep track of. I pride myself on having pretty good instincts and, from the sound of it, things were getting a bit threadbare at Campbell Hall, the ancestral home of the family.

Susan spent a lot of time talking about the royals and I spent a lot of time trying to be polite. I’ve met more than my fair share of royalty, and although most of them are pleasant enough – after all, that’s their job – I’m too much of a small “r” republican and an Okie populist to take them very seriously. I always subscribed to the view of Huey Long, the Kingfish of Louisiana, who said, “Every man a king. No man wears a crown.”⁽²⁾

That’s one of the other attractions about San Felipe. We really don’t have any class distinction here. Everybody’s about as equal as you can get, and nobody gives a tinker’s dam who your parents were, let alone some relative from the 13th Century. But that’s what makes horse races, and Susan liked the royals. So I did my best to keep my populist instincts in check, although I did manage to get off a cheap shot or two about the royal family, based on personal experience, which she found both amusing and impressive.

She couldn’t believe it, for example, when I told her one of the worst times I ever had in my life was the day I spent in the Royal Enclosure during Ascot. I was wearing a top hat and a morning coat, and to my way of thinking I looked like the head doorman of some overpriced hotel. But Susan was impressed, and that’s all that mattered at the time.

Dickie, her ex-husband, was one of those Brits you find hanging around the bar at the Savoy or in the ports of former colonies trying to con drinks and meals from Americans who, for reasons I’ve never been able to understand, seem to think British hustlers are charming. It’s gotta be the accents.

Dickie was typical, always pitching some get-rich-quick scheme that only required some unsuspecting North American to turn over his life savings and – presto – they’d own all the tapioca rights to Uganda or some other preposterous thing. What’s also typical is that Dickie – and why in god’s name do the graduates of British public schools have such nicknames? – spent the rest of his time scheming his way into a knighthood.

After Susan divorced Dickie she had scraped together enough money to start her gallery and was doing all right. She wasn't making a fortune, but it provided enough money to maintain a comfortable lifestyle, if not the lifestyle to which she believed her position in society entitled her.

Regrettably, the little voice that usually warns me about life-threatening situations had taken the week off, I guess, and I found myself falling for Susan Baker-Campbell for the worst reason in the world for two people to become a couple; namely, that they're lonely.

By the time the ten days were over, I was convinced I was in love with Susan, and I thought she loved me, too. We talked almost every day on the phone. I'd call her from wherever I happened to be, which back in 1960 and '61 was a lot easier said than done in some locations. I started inventing some great excuses to visit London for extended stays, and she came back to visit San Felipe twice during the next year. Those times, though, instead of staying at the beach club she stayed in this house with me.

It was nice having her here. I will say this; she did a nice job of spiffing up the place. She selected a lot of the artwork you see around here. She also convinced me to hire Marta as a housekeeper-cook full time. Up until then I'd only have someone in to clean the place on an irregular basis. So the house became more livable and the food certainly improved.

On April 1, 1961 – a most appropriate date in retrospect – we were married in a ceremony in Campbell Hall. As Time Magazine noted in its people section, “Married: Raconteur-Capitalist J. Jeremiah Jefferson III, 53, to London gallery owner Susan Baker-Campbell, thirtyish. He for the first time. She for the second.”

For a honeymoon, we'd decided to cruise down the Caribbean coast to Central America. At that time I had a pretty impressive ketch named the La Adventure. I loved that ship, but I didn't get much chance to use her, what with all my business commitments and all, so this was a great time and a great opportunity in more ways than one. What was intended to be a quiet and tranquil passage took a decidedly exciting turn when we sailed into the bay at Swan Island, off the coast of Honduras.

Now when I tell you to sail clear of a secret C.I.A. operation, I know what I'm talking about. To support the Bay of Pigs invasion in '61, Honduras “let” the C.I.A. set up a transmitter on Swan Island. It was the worst kept secret in Honduras.

One Sunday just before the invasion, some Honduran students sailed over to Swan Island with the intent of taking it back and kicking out the C.I.A. My bride and I had just sailed into Swan Island the night before on “La Adventure.” The C.I.A. agents were in a panic when they radioed headquarters for instructions. The duty officer sent them back a message: “Give them plenty of beer and protect the family jewels.” So I helped “escort” the students that afternoon, drinking all the beer on the island! After a while, the students laid out a cement sign that read, “This island belongs to Honduras.” They raised the Honduran flag, we all saluted it and agreed it had been a most pleasant Sunday afternoon. The students “marched” back to their boats and I towed them back to the mainland. After our departure, the message sent to Langley said, “Swan to H.Q. Students have embarked. Liquor supply exhausted. Family jewels intact.”

I swear it's a true story, and if you don't believe me, look it up in David Atlee Phillips' book, “The Night Watch.”⁽³⁾ By the way, the C.I.A. didn't get around to returning control of Swan Island to Honduras until 1971. I guess the lesson is: don't invite anyone from the C.I.A. for a weekend visit ... or be sure to lock up the beer if you do!

That incident sort of set the tone for our relationship as a married couple. I found the episode interesting, fascinating and informative. I enjoyed drinking beer with the students and hearing their views, and I also liked the C.I.A. guys. I liked the spontaneity of it. I also found myself

thinking of how Mr. Solomon would have just lapped up this story. Susan, on the other hand, had a different view.

“Why did we waste the whole day with those tacky people?” she complained. “Honestly, J3, swilling cheap beer and rum and pretending you thought they were interesting.”

“I wasn’t pretending. They are interesting – the students and the C.I.A. guys. That’s what makes the world go around, Susan. Honorable people can look at the same facts and draw different conclusions. It happens millions of times a day.”

“Well, I found them all tacky, and I thought the students were very inflammatory. As Daddy says, ‘The lesser classes, no matter how much you try to help them, really aren’t very civilized.’”

“Well, Susan, not everybody can shop at Asprey’s, and believe it or not, not everybody wants to, either.”

She sulked over to the foredeck and it was then that the little voice who’d been absent for so long suddenly returned. Turned out to be an expensive absence.

After the honeymoon we returned to San Felipe and moved into my house. Susan busied herself in redecorating not just the house but the hotel and my office, spending prodigious sums of money on furniture, crystal, Frette linens and Limoges china, all from Europe of course. To her vast disappointment, I only let her buy artwork by Caribbean and Latin America artists. She suffered that indignity as stoically as she could. The ironic result is today I possess one of the most outstanding and extensive collections in the world of Caribbean and Latin American art. It’s worth a fortune now that it’s in fashion. And to think Susan used to grouse about how cheap the stuff was. Well, to paraphrase my pal, Ted Turner, “I was Caribbean before Caribbean was cool.”⁽⁴⁾ Susan just didn’t know what a trendsetter I was.

All this shopping required Susan to take several European trips, and with each one she stayed away a little longer. Between her travels to Europe and my travels around the region, we didn’t see much of each other and when we did spend time together our conversations and attitudes toward each other became increasingly strained. We never really argued. It was just a slow distancing of two people.

Susan increasingly was describing San Felipe as tedious. You see, she was developing the island fever a lot of people get after they decide it would be great to live full time in the Caribbean, not just on vacation. The laid back lifestyle so attractive to tourists can become very tiresome once you take up residence. You need a certain mindset and attitude that Susan just never had. I tried to encourage her to accompany me on my travels, but she always declined unless it involved something like meeting a head of state or attending a state dinner. Even then she wasn’t happy. To her, dinner at the presidential palace in Santo Domingo was nowhere near as glamorous as one in Buckingham Palace, which is where she really longed to be.

In early December 1963, I came down with a horrible case of strep throat. It knocked me lower than I could believe. Doc Johnson patched me up, but told me to spend the rest of the month in bed recovering my strength. Susan and I had planned to go to London to celebrate the holiday season at Campbell Hall. I dreaded the thought, and being ill gave me a great excuse for not making the trip. On December 14 I had one of the pilots fly Susan to Jamaica, where she caught a BOAC⁽⁵⁾ flight directly to London.

I spent Christmas Eve by myself. I’d naturally given all the house staff the week off. On Christmas Day I was cured enough and feeling well enough to spend the whole day and well into the evening celebrating with people from all over the island. Alfonso and I along with a couple of dozen other people had a gigantic Christmas dinner at the beach club, and sat and reminisced and talked and laughed late into the night. It was one of those special evenings you wish with all your heart would never end.

It was the last Christmas I shared with Alfonso, although I didn’t know it at the time.

I talked to Susan by phone with decreasing frequency, and each time she announced she had to delay her return for one reason or another. Then, during the first week of March 1964, I received papers from her solicitors in London, petitioning for a divorce. Their arrival came more as a relief than anything else. I turned them over to my London attorney Davis Andrews and called Susan at Campbell Hall. I told her I wanted to be fair in any divorce settlement and I wished to resolve this quickly and without rancor. We chatted for maybe 20 minutes. It was the last time I ever talked to her. I really felt very little sadness.

In June I dispatched by courier a very large check to Davis Andrews to close the chapter of my life regarding Susan Baker-Campbell. It was one of life's expensive lessons.

Some years later I was having dinner with Davis Andrews at his West End club and he asked me if I'd ever talked to Susan.

"Not since 1964. I have no interest in talking with her."

"Well, she's remarried," Davis said. "Some blowhard of a chap who just received his knighthood. They're living in Mayfair in a lovely home I think you bought for them, from what I can find out about this fellow. Your settlement money also helped spruce up Campbell Hall. All in all, my boy, I think the National Historic Trust owes you a debt of gratitude."

"Andrews," I asked, "have you ever visited Swan Island?"

"Good god, no. But it sounds fascinating."

Chapter Seven

* * * *

Che

Who's the big guy standing between Charlie and me on the dock in Havana? You mean the guy with the muscular arms who looks like he could pinch off Charlie's and my heads any time he wanted? Well, that's Col. Mike Castle and, by golly, he's strong enough to do just that. Actually, his name isn't Mike Castle. It's Miguel Castile, and he's one of the bravest and smartest SOBs I've ever met and, trust me, that's saying something. I call him Mike Castle because, well, that's what his name translates to in English.

Mike was born in Puerto Rico in 1932, not exactly with a silver spoon in his mouth. No, his mother was a seamstress and his dad was a plantation worker. They lived in a wooden shack with a dirt floor and no indoor plumbing or electricity. But what the Castile family lacked in money and possessions, they more than made up for in love and encouragement. Unlike me, Mike was an outstanding student and a spectacular athlete. He was the fastest, strongest and smartest young guy on the island of Puerto Rico.

In 1950, he earned an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He lettered in track and football, but also was on the debating team and graduated in the top ten in his class in 1954. If he'd stayed in the regular army, he'd probably be a four-star general today. Instead, he was recruited right into the Special Operations Department⁽¹⁾ of the army, which basically does odd jobs for the C.I.A.

Between 1954 and 1958, Mike was all over the place – Panama, Guatemala, Honduras, wherever the C.I.A. needed a helping hand. And each time he went on a mission, he impressed his superiors with his courage, guile and brains. In 1958, when it appeared things were going to come to a boil in Cuba, Mike Castle was sent to Havana on one of the most sensitive assignments you could imagine – to help Charlie Grutwilder keep an eye on the place.

Charlie was getting up in years, and the powers-that-be at Langley felt he could use a little help. An extra pair of eyes and ears and legs, if you will, 'cause the rebels were gaining on Batista slowly but surely. Langley needed somebody who was as smart as Charlie, and believe me that was a tall order. Somebody who could handle any situation – mental or physical – that was thrown at him. So they chose the only man they could think of for the job.

To my way of thinking what makes this a particularly great story is the fact that, as you can see in the picture, Mike is black. And try as they might, none of those racist Ivy League snobs at Langley could come up with a better man for the job.

So in August of '58, Mike Castle showed up in Havana, Cuba, with forged papers identifying him as a Mexican citizen from the town of Merida, and an able-bodied seaman. This was the perfect cover for him. You see, one of the activities Charlie ran out of Caribe's was a deep sea fishing business with a couple of boats he'd charter out to the tourists. Among his many prodigious talents, Charlie was a world-class deep sea fisherman. That's why the Caribe's sign has a marlin on it.

Those boats were a valuable accessory to Charlie's activities. Over the years, old Charlie had used 'em for a lot more than just deep sea fishing. They allowed for a lot of freedom of movement. Each one of 'em had secret, souped-up engines and carried the latest communications gear – classified or not – that anyone could imagine. When Mike showed up in Havana, it made perfect sense for Charlie to put him in charge as captain of one of those boats.

Mike and Charlie got along like two peas in a pod. They were both good-looking, physically imposing men. Both of them were just as bright as a new penny, and they both loved the cut-and-thrust of the covert world and the intellectual challenges it presented. After all the years Charlie'd been in Cuba, he had plenty to tell Mike, and Mike absorbed it all like a sponge.

By January 1, 1959, when Batista fled Cuba and Fidel Castro took over with his band of revolutionaries, Mike was totally up to speed. And though Charlie was still the main man to see in Havana, the next best guy was Miguel Castile.

With Castro and his motley crew now in charge, things got pretty chaotic in Cuba. Castro was a hell of a revolutionary and a brilliant military strategist, but he and his crew were godawful when it came to running a government. Not only were they an incompetent bunch of administrators, but their overblown rhetoric, policies and actions offended every possible foreign government, particularly the United States, which had some pretty important vested interests on the isle of Cuba.

Now Batista was a bad actor, and nobody in Washington was saddened by his demise. Far from it. Charlie had urged Washington to take a patient and tolerant view of Castro's new regime, and at first the United States did. But in no time at all, Castro managed to get crossways with so many people that the only place he could find aid and comfort was in Moscow. Believe it or not, Castro didn't start off as a communist. But through miscommunications by everyone and incredible stupidity on Castro's part, he managed to paint himself into a corner. The only way he was gonna survive was to make Cuba a client state of the Soviet Union and, by god, that's just what he did.

Instead of a glorious workers' paradise, he created a barbarous and repressive police state far worse than the one he'd taken over from Batista. Seems to be a recurring theme in the world of revolutionaries. The drug of power is just too much for them to handle. Truth and humanity give way to greed and avarice. George Orwell's *Animal Farm*⁽²⁾ plays itself out again and again. Remind me to tell you someday about my experiences with the Ortega brothers in Nicaragua.

I first met the Bearded One in February of 1960. By then he was in full flower as a junior despot, and like all junior despots he had surrounded himself with some of the loosest screws and biggest fruitcakes this side of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. In addition to his brother, Raul, who was in his own right a world-class sociopath, Castro's inner circle included Che Guevara, who was the gold standard of whack-jobs in Cuba at that time.

Well, all three of them – none of whom I'd met until then – were waiting for me when I walked into the room that day. I'd been summoned from San Felipe to discuss our landing rights in Cuba. We'd been flying regularly scheduled, twice-a-day round trips between San Felipe and Havana since 1948. I figured Fidel was calling me in to tell me either we couldn't do it anymore, or our landing fees were being increased substantially and, oh by the way, were now payable to a Swiss bank account.

Although the flights from San Felipe to Havana were profitable, I was prepared to simply walk away from them rather than pay blackmail to this crowd.

“So you see, Mr. Jefferson, even though we are aware of San Felipe's unique position, it is embarrassing to the revolution to have your airline fly in and out of here unless it is run and controlled by the workers of Cuba. After all, it is the workers who own Cuba now,” smiled the Bearded One.

“Well, I tell you what, boys. I don't wanna embarrass anyone, so tomorrow morning I'll just take the eight o'clock flight back to San Felipe and, hell, we're gone. No more embarrassments for anybody.” I started to get up from the chair across from his desk.

“Goddamn it. Just hold the phone for a minute,” bellowed Charlie Grutwilder, seated on the couch to my left. “Sit down, J3. Hell’s bells, Fidel, what are you talkin’ about? You’ve already pissed off enough people, and now you wanna go cut your connection with San Felipe? You just may need that, boy.”

“We also have some questions about you and Caribe’s, Mr. Grutwilder,” sneered the little runt I later learned was Che. “Since you’re here, you can answer them now. Or I could conduct our interview in a less convivial location.”

“Fuck you. Fuck you, you little twerp,” an agitated Charlie Grutwilder sputtered while extending him an Italian salute. “Go take a bath.”⁽³⁾

“Leave it alone, Che,” said Fidel in a flat voice, staring intently at the diminutive revolutionary. “You’ve got plenty of other things to occupy your time.”

By now I was standing. “Well, Mr. President, it sure has been a pleasure meeting you,” I lied.

“We’ll be back to you shortly with a decision. In the meantime, everything remains as it was,” Castro said, lounging in his chair and not bothering to get up.

That was 26 years ago, and I’m still waiting for his decision. Whenever I’ve seen the Bearded One since then, I always ask him when he’s gonna make up his mind about our flights into Cuba, and he always smiles and says, “Shortly.”

After we were back at Caribe’s, I asked Charlie, “Who was the little guy who smelled so bad?”

“Hell, that’s Che Guevara,” snorted Charlie. “And he’s supposed to be the ‘intellectual’ of this revolution, if you can believe it. Not only does he have a brain smaller than a flax seed, but he’s also one mean, bloodthirsty sumbitch. As director general of the, you’ll pardon the expression, War Crimes Trials, he had 600 people executed for no other reason than the fact that he enjoys having people killed. Watch yourself, J3. He’s mean and he’s dumb, which is a dangerous combination, and he’s got it in for you.”

“It appears he’s also got it in for you, Charlie. What was all that talk about interviewing you in an unpleasant place?”

“Oh, fuck him. Believe it or not, Castro needs me a hell of a lot more than he needs that little twerp. You mark my words, J3. That boy’ll screw up sooner or later, and that’ll be the end of him.”

I didn’t ask Charlie what he meant by any of that, but as usual Charlie was right, because in January of ’61, Che Guevara screwed up big time. He did just about the dumbest thing a guy in his position could do – he went on television and criticized Fidel Castro.

It amuses the hell out of me that among certain people Che Guevara has taken on folk-hero status. Those are people who obviously didn’t know him. If they knew him or even knew anything about him, they’d definitely have second thoughts. No, Che Guevara was mean, duplicitous, dumb, and as Charlie said, a “bloodthirsty sumbitch.” He wrote a lot of disingenuous crap about wanting to take care of the poor downtrodden workers, which would’ve been wonderful if he hadn’t been such a flaming hypocrite.

Anybody who knows anything about him knows that Che Guevara considered himself a cosmopolitan *bon vivant*. While it was all right for the workers to eat rice and beans, Che considered himself a gourmet and a connoisseur of fine cognacs and cigars. While in Havana, he lived in a mansion that, of course, had been stolen from its previous owners under the guise of revolutionary equality. He had a French-trained chef, along with an army of household servants. Well, hey, I guess you have to relax after a tough day of murdering and torturing innocent people, all in the name of creating a workers’ paradise. He was a mean, no good SOB.

Now remember, Che wasn't even a Cuban. No, he was born on June 6, 1928, in Rosario, Argentina. He claimed he'd gone to the University of Buenos Aires and received a medical degree in 1952, but that was just another one of his lies.⁽⁴⁾ He didn't graduate, and he was no more a medical doctor than Father Joe is a priest. He met Castro in Mexico in 1956, and that was the start of a sometimes beautiful friendship that was to last for only nine years.

After the revolution took over Cuba, Castro had him made a Cuban citizen and a hero of the revolution. But after his intemperate remarks on TV in 1961, it was only a matter of time before he'd be gone. So in April of '65, Che Guevara – and by the way “Che” is Argentinean slang for “hey, you” – gave up all his positions and his Cuban citizenship in a ceremony in front of the Bearded One himself, and left to pursue revolutionary causes and liberate workers throughout Latin America.

Actually, he was looking for a country he could overthrow and run by himself. See, it's a little hard to be a revolutionary soldier when you've had asthma since childhood as Che did, and you have to carry an oxygen inhaler with you all the time. Tends to cramp your style in battle.

Well, Castro promised to support Che in his quest. Anything to get him out of Cuba and out of Castro's beard. Che selected Bolivia as the perfect place for a bloodthirsty sociopath to run. Castro provided only minimal support, and things just didn't go too well. In spite of Che's efforts, his revolutionary army in Bolivia never amounted to more than a dozen men, and his revolutionary rhetoric never caught on with the local folks. In addition to being an inept military leader, Che found himself up against a pretty good opponent. The Bolivian army's counter insurgency forces had been trained quite well by the United States military.

So Che was just kind of mumbly-pegging around in Bolivia when, on September 15, 1967, I had lunch with Mike Castle during one of his visits to the beach club.

“J3, how'd you like to do me a big favor?”

“Sure, Mike, if I can. What do you need?”

“Well, I think I've got information on the exact location of Che Guevara's camp in Bolivia.”

“No kidding. How'd you get that?” I perked up.

“Let's just say Senor Castro would be delighted to see Senor Guevara removed from the world stage.”

“I see. Have you passed this information on to your friends at Langley?”

“Yes, and they suggested I might pass it on to you. You see, Langley doesn't want its fingerprints on this. They think it might be in everybody's best interests to have a neutral third-party pass this information on to the Bolivians.”

Since Charlie's death, Mike had been running the show at Caribe's, and I'll be go-to-hell if he didn't sound more and more like Charlie every day.

“You see, J3, you'd be doing a whole bunch of people a favor. Langley would be happy, and I'd look good in Langley's eyes. Castro would be happy, and you'd look good in Castro's eyes. And he'd be off your back about your seaplane service. Most important, the Bolivians would be delighted to get rid of Ernesto Guevara.”

Well, I know a no-lose proposition when I hear one, and this sure sounded like one to me. Two days later, I took off in a DC-3 for La Paz, Bolivia, to meet with some folks who could pass along the coordinates for Che's base camp to Gustavo Villoldo, who was in charge of hunting down Che.⁽⁵⁾ Because of the nature of the information, I didn't think it would be prudent to phone it in. That's why I flew down to deliver it personally.

I must say based on several additional run-ins I'd had with Che, and just from what I knew about him, this was a mission I was happy to accept.

I hung around La Paz for a few days. It's another one of those remote, isolated and exotic cities I find so attractive. At an altitude of 11,910 feet, it's the highest capital in the world. At that altitude, you don't need to drink many *cervasas* to feel their punch.

Bolivia has been famous for its mineral wealth since the Spanish colonial times. Once part of the ancient Incan empire, it was conquered by the Spanish in the 16th Century and finally won its independence in 1825, naming itself after the famous liberator, Simon Bolivar. It hasn't exactly been stable since then. Bolivia's had more than 60 revolutions, 70 presidents and eleven different constitutions. About the last thing it needed was Che Guevara throwing another roadblock across the path to democracy.

On October 7, 1967, after a brief fire fight in which he was wounded, Che Guevara finally was captured. The lie that's told about his capture is that he stood up ramrod straight and said, "I know you've come to kill me. Shoot, coward. You're only going to kill a man."⁽⁶⁾ Well, that was just that – another lie about Che Guevara. But the next day, October 8, the Bolivians did indeed shoot and kill Che. Believe me, nobody in Castro's government, especially the Bearded One, shed any tears when they got the news. Same for Washington and Bolivia, you can be sure. In fact, the peasants Che was trying to organize to overthrow their government were very helpful to the Bolivian military in putting an end to Che.⁽⁷⁾ And that is a fact.

How do I know Che's supposedly courageous behavior was a lie? And that he was really hiding behind some bushes having an asthma attack when they found him? And that he started crying and begging for his life, promising to turn over the names of his comrades in an effort to save his own sorry life? How do I know all this? Well, in addition to the official reports corroborating it all, I've got an eye witness. You see, Mike Castle was there that day with a miniature tape recorder and camera stuffed into what looked like a Zippo lighter.

A couple years ago, after 26 years in Cuba and 30 years after he graduated from the Point, Mike retired from what had been a pretty exciting career. He moved back to Puerto Rico, bought himself a spectacular home in Dorado, fell in love and got married to a wonderful girl from Venezuela. And last year, at the age of 53, Mike became the proud and beaming father of a beautiful baby girl named Michelle. I'm happy to say that I'm her proud and beaming godfather.

I wanted to get her something really special for her baptism. Something she might appreciate years later. Something that might help her remember both her dad and me, and would also help her understand her father's values.

Well, after much thinking, it finally dawned on me. These things are never as easy as they should be. I had to enlist the services of Davis Andrews and his staff in London to get it. But, by golly, just before the baptism service was to begin on a brilliant day filled with so much hope and promise and joy of life, a special bonded courier from Christie's in London walked into the small Catholic Church in Dorado and handed it to me. A faithfully accurate pen-and-aged-parchment replica of a true revolutionary document, The Declaration of Independence.

As I stood there holding it, looking at young Michelle Castile cradled lovingly in the enormous arms of her father, I thought back to Che Guevara and Castro and Cuba, and Charlie and Mike and what they'd done. Impetuously, I took out my pen and circled the words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed..."

Chapter Eight

* * * *

The Last Mrs. J

I've liked Puerto Rico from the first time I visited as a young man working for Mr. Solomon. Puerto Rico is a hybrid – neither a state nor an independent country. Instead, it's a commonwealth of the United States.⁽¹⁾ Nobody's really certain what that means, and for years there's been a debate as to whether or not Puerto Rico should be a state or should be given its independence.

By my way of thinking, it ought to be a state. I don't think I'm gonna live long enough to see that. Anyhow, Puerto Rico is unique. It possesses great colonial treasures, a magnificent port guarded by the brooding fortress El Morro, gorgeous beaches, jungle, the only tropical rain forest in the United States, mountains, rivers and valleys. And you can get around the whole place in one day's time.

San Juan is a vibrant city, and Ponce on the south shore is a gem. The people of Puerto Rico are warm, welcoming and fiercely proud, with much to be proud of. Since going to work for Mr. Solomon, I've been a regular visitor to Puerto Rico. We don't fly regular seaplane flights there, because it's part of the United States – so the F.A.A. would be involved – but I've landed in that great bay enough times it feels like I'm visiting an old friend when the plane touches down.

I used to stay at a hotel in old San Juan, but in the early '60s I switched to the Isla Verde area and started staying at the Americana. It was considered pretty glitzy at the time and I enjoyed it, even though it's not my normal style. They were always gracious and accommodating whenever I stayed. I knew everybody in the place, and I had the run of it.

Of course today the Americana is no longer the Americana, but back then it was a toss-up between it and the El San Juan⁽²⁾, which was right next door, as to which was the liveliest hotel in town.

Early in the evening on Wednesday, March 3, 1965, I walked into the casino at the Americana after having checked in a few hours earlier. Now I'm not a gambling man, and if they built casinos based on guys like me, well they wouldn't be building many casinos. The most I'll ever do is play blackjack for a hundred dollars a hand, and after I've lost a grand or two, that's it for me. Not just for the night. For the whole trip.

At that time, the casino manager at the Americana was a fella by the name of Carlos. He later became the casino manager at the El San Juan, but that's a story for another day. Carlos was one of those slippery looking guys who went out of his way to be ingratiating. And he always wore sunglasses – those big, dark wrap-around Raybans that made him look like a member of the Tonton Macoutes in Haiti.

"Ah, Mr. Jefferson. Welcome. Welcome. A great pleasure to see you again, sir," he said, bowing and scraping and pretending that he really cared. "I've been trying to reach you for several days, Mr. Jefferson."

"So my office has told me, Carlos. I've been traveling, and it's been a little bit difficult to communicate with the outside world."

"Another visit to Haiti?" he whispered conspiratorially.

"Now, now, Carlos, never you mind. What, may I ask, is so urgent?"

"Well, Saturday is the annual Miss Puerto Rico pageant and the casino is one of the sponsors. We get to appoint a judge. I thought perhaps you might like to represent our interests. It could be great fun for you, and who knows what might happen since there will be 50 beautiful women there."

"Judge a beauty contest? Carlos, you gotta be kidding."

“No, no, I’m quite serious.”

“Carlos, for god sakes. My track record in picking women for anything is not too sterling. I appreciate the offer, but I think you’d better find yourself another patsy.”

“No, no, please, Mr. Jefferson, please. It would be a great honor for the casino if you would be our representative.”

“When does this thing start?” I asked.

“Well, the preliminary events already have begun. But the final judging is Saturday night. It starts at six o’clock and should be over no later than ten. There’s a reception afterwards, so if you were to leave here by five o’clock you can be assured of returning no later than midnight, if time is a consideration. Naturally, I will put a car and driver at your disposal.”

“Carlos, I have my own car and driver.”

“Ah, yes, of course, Mr. Jefferson. Security perhaps?”

“I have my own security, too.”

“Yes. I keep forgetting. I ask you again, Mr. Jefferson, please do this as a favor to the casino and the hotel. We would be most honored.”

For reasons I still can’t figure out, I said, “All right, Carlos. I should have my head examined, but I’ll do it.”

Immediately I cursed myself for taking Carlos’ bait, and spent the next two days unsuccessfully trying to figure out how I could get out of it.

So at five o’clock on Saturday afternoon, Nunzio drove me from the Americana to the convention center. I went in through a special entrance reserved for VIPs and met my fellow judges for the evening. “What a mixed grill that is,” I thought, and began hoping I wouldn’t get stuck in the elevator with any of them. They were the usual cast of characters. Some haughty woman from New York who apparently ran a modeling agency, a Latin-lover-looking movie star who was gay, a short fat balding guy who was obviously threadbare but passing himself off as a movie producer, a singer whose career had seen better days, and on and on.

There were a dozen of ‘em. I searched my mind desperately to figure out how I could bolt and run, but try as I might I couldn’t come up with a good idea, so I sat down at the judges’ stand and the pageant began.

It was dreadful in the way that only these things can be. It started with a big opening number designed to showcase the contestants’ singing and dancing talents. Susan would’ve called it tedious, and for once in her life she’d have been right. Then they introduced the contestants. All of them were attractive and all of them struck me as being the same. How any red-blooded American boy from Oklahoma could be bored looking at 50 beautiful women I’ll never know, but by god, in no time my eyes started to glaze over.

Until about halfway through the introductions. One of the contestants was different. It was the eyes. All the other contestants had what you might call the eye of the tiger – kind of cold and competitive. Not this one, though. Hers twinkled with what could only be described as amusement. Her smile was plastered on as phony as the others, but in the corners I swear I saw a hint of a smile that only a cynic can have. I checked my card of contestants and found that her name was Rosalia Gatos. She was representing the town of Porke-no on the eastern side of the island. What an appropriate town, I thought to myself.

The contest went on for what seemed an eternity. Miss Gatos made it through the first cut, but not to the finals.

When the pageant was over at about ten fifteen, I was thinking, “God, I can’t take another minute of this.” I just wanted to go somewhere for dinner and call it a night. But all of the judges and officials were heading for the reception in a private room off the lobby. And good manners dictated at least making a cursory appearance, a “drop by” as they say in politics.

The room was crowded with media, the contestants, the stage door mothers, pageant officials, sponsors, judges and the usual hangers-on. Carlos was there beaming, as much as anyone wearing Raybans in the middle of the night can beam. I chatted with him for a few minutes. Everyone was congratulating themselves and each other for a successful pageant. There were several bars and two huge buffets – groaning boards really – stocked with all manner of food. I shook hands with a couple of the local politicians. Interestingly enough, none of them had their wives with ‘em.

I decided to help myself to some of the bill of fare before leaving. As I approached the buffet table I saw her standing in the corner with three other contestants and two oily looking guys, one of whom I swear was also wearing a pair of Raybans, no doubt on his way to a Carlos look-alike contest. I strode over, walked up to her and said, “Miss Gatos, if it’s any consolation to you, I want you to know I voted for you.”

“Well, Mr. Jefferson, it appears you were the only one,” she smiled.

“J. Jeremiah Jefferson,” I said, extending my hand to the would-be Latin lovers. “Ladies, a pleasure to meet you,” I said to the other three contestants.

“Wait a minute,” I said, returning my attention to Miss Gatos. “How did you know my name?”

“Quite easy, sir. Not only are you famous, but you’re also wearing a name tag.”

“I’ll be damned. You’re right. ‘Hello, my name is J. Jeremiah Jefferson III,’” I said, removing it and putting it on the tray of a passing waiter. By now the two Latin lovers and the three contestants were slowly moving away.

“Did you really vote for me?”

“As a matter of fact, I did. I thought you should’ve won. But what do I know?”

“I take it you don’t judge a lot of beauty contests, Mr. Jefferson.”

“This was my first. And call me J3. Everybody does.”

“All right, J3.”

There was something about her that captivated me. The phony contest smile had been replaced by a glitteringly sincere one. The brown eyes were large and expressive, and they twinkled with humor and knowledge. She was 24 years old and a student at the University of Puerto Rico majoring in political science.

“How did you become a contestant in this...?”

“Pageant,” she offered helpfully.

“Yes, pageant.”

“It was on a dare. One of my friends suggested I enter the local contest in Porke-no. I thought, ‘Why not?’ It might be fun. I might learn something.”

“And what did you learn?”

“That if you’re in a beauty contest, you’ll hear every pick up line in the book.”

She delivered the line with a bob of her head that I found endearing and humorous.

We stood and talked for another 20 minutes, amusing ourselves with the unspoken knowledge that we were the only two who, as Charlie Grutwilder would’ve said, had this whole place clocked. Finally I looked at my watch and it was already eleven.

“Are you hungry?” I asked.

“I’m starved. I haven’t eaten since lunch.”

“Would you like to grab a bite to eat somewhere?”

“I’d love to, but we’re not allowed to leave without a chaperone.”

“Can you believe that?”

“Actually I can, but who’s going to say anything if I leave with the great J3? I would love to get something to eat.”

“Well, grab your purse and let’s get the hell out of here.”

As we strolled out of the reception no one said a thing. I stopped, shook hands with Carlos, introduced her and off we went. I could feel a couple hundred pairs of eyes boring in on my back, but, hey, who's gonna tell the great J3 he can't take an attractive lady out for dinner? The car was double-parked out front, of course, and as Nunzio pulled away she howled, "That will give them something to talk about. Don't you think?"

"Based on the quality of conversation in there, I'd say they need something to talk about. What do you have a taste for?"

"Oh, I don't care. I could eat anything."

"Nunzio, let's go to Amelio's café."

"Amelio's. I'm impressed," she said.

"Do you know it?"

"Only by its reputation. I'm afraid a starving student can't afford to eat at Amelio's café."

"Well, I think you'll like it."

Amelio's was the best and most expensive seafood restaurant in the Caribbean.

"Goodness me, Mr. Jefferson. Where would you have taken the winner?"

"Probably McDonald's. I don't think she's ready for adult food and beverages. I loved it when they asked her what she wants in life, and she said, 'Peace, justice and brotherhood.' The only thing she left out was 'and my own apartment.'

"And what do you want in life, Miss Gatos?" I asked.

"Well, I'm not sure yet, Mr. Jefferson. But whatever it is, I assure you it will not involve beauty contests."

By then we had reach Amelio's. As we walked in Amelio himself trotted over.

"J3," he greeted me and we exchanged a warm *embrazzo*.

"Amelio, shake hands with Rosalia Gatos."

"*Mucho gusto, senorita,*" he said.

"*Mucho gusto,*" she replied.

"Amelio, is it too late or can we still get something to eat?"

"But, of course, Mr. Jefferson. Whatever you wish."

It was four in the morning when we finally left Amelio's. Late for a restaurant even by San Juan standards. The time had flown by. It seemed like it'd only been a few minutes. We'd talked and laughed and talked some more. I found myself totally entranced. This beautiful, bright, opinionated woman was an absolute joy. She read, loved history, followed current events. We talked about the dilemma of whether Puerto Rico should continue as a commonwealth or be granted statehood or independence.

"We have to decide one way or the other," she said. "It's not fair to leave us in limbo."

"Which of the options do you prefer?" I inquired.

"J3, the most cherished possessions that I have are my American citizenship and my American passport." Her eyes widened. "Does that answer your question?"

"It certainly does, Miss Gatos. It certainly does."

Fortunately it was only a short ride from Condado to the Caribe Hilton where she was staying. It was the official hotel of the Miss Puerto Rico pageant. As we pulled into the entrance, she said, "What will people say? You keeping a daughter of Puerto Rico out 'til almost sunrise."

"I don't know, but it won't be nice. Let me walk you in."

"No. Don't be ridiculous."

“Will you be all right?”

“Yes, of course, I can handle this. After all, I’m a contestant in a beauty contest, not an indentured servant.”

“Well, if you have any problems let me know. Rosalia, I had a wonderful time tonight.”

“I did, too.”

“Look, don’t be offended by this, and please take it in the spirit intended. If you wouldn’t mind, that is, I’d like to see you again.”

She looked at me with wide brown eyes and said, in a pretty fair imitation of Amelio, “But, of course, Mr. Jefferson. Whatever you wish.”

“Let me ask you a question.”

“What’s that?” she replied.

“Don’t you ever attend class?”

It had been three weeks since we had first met and during that time we’d been inseparable. We went everywhere and did everything together. Rosalia had virtually moved into my suite at the Americana, and I kept calling down to the front desk extending my stay. There was crisis after crisis to be attended to in San Felipe, and I did the best I could via long distance, but nothing concerned me enough that I really wanted to leave.

We bummed around all over the island. Rosalia was a true patriot of Puerto Rico. I thought I knew Puerto Rico, but my eyes were opened wide by her. Seeing this great island through her eyes, listening to her speak, witnessing the passion she had for her native land changed my views. Well, it didn’t really change them. I just looked at things from a different perspective.

She hated riding around in the limousine, so I went to Hertz and rented a red Ford Mustang convertible. We stayed in some small country inns, visited places that even I didn’t know existed, ate the best food, slept late, made love and laughed. Well, we didn’t laugh about making love.

Okay, we probably did – we laughed about practically everything.

That’s what I remember most and what I miss the most about Rosalia – her laughter. And I miss the easy banter we enjoyed so much. She was passionate in her beliefs, and she brought out a degree of conviction and passion in me I’d never shown before. I felt alive in a way that was completely new to me. Each day I found the problems and crises of Caribbean Traders increasingly intrusive, and wished this dream would never end...

We were flying on the Grumman and were on final approach to San Felipe. It was her first visit and I was anxious about showing her the island.

“Since I’m in my final semester, it’s really not all that necessary to show up for class. The secret is reading the course material and choosing as your friends people who actually go to class and take excellent notes.”

From the moment she saw it, Rosalia entered into a love affair with San Felipe. She loved everything about the place and never once found it “tedious.”

“J3, it’s beautiful,” she beamed. “You were right. I love it.”

I showed her the beach club, took her to Alfonso’s for a sloe gin fizz.

“Ah, the famous Alfonso,” she said upon meeting him.

“No, just a pale imitation, I’m afraid,” said Alfonso.

He still hadn’t gotten over his father’s death, but his dad would’ve been proud of the way he was running the place. Nothing had changed and, in fact, a few things had improved. We were seated at a small table when she asked, “Did Alfonso really invent guacamole dip?”

“He sure did, but for a bright guy he made a pretty expensive mistake.”

“What was that?”

“Well, he never patented the process, and by the time he got around to thinking about it, it was far too late. Imagine the royalties Alfonso would be receiving today if Alfonso had been a little more diligent.”

That evening, I took her to my home – this home – perched high above Pitts Key. It was twilight and the lights in Pitts Key were twinkling.

“So what do you think?” I asked.

“It’s spectacular, J3. I love the artwork. It really captures the Caribbean.”

“Well, that makes us a cult of two.”

The next week was difficult. I wanted to show Rosalia around and introduce her to people, but I also had a full dance card of problems at Caribbean Traders. Rosalia was great. She was completely self-reliant. I’d leave early in the morning for the office, and she’d take the jeep and go about her merry way. I’d meet her for a late lunch every day and she’d bring me up to date on her activities. She was all over San Felipe, meeting people and making friends everywhere she went. She even made a fan out of Father Joe.

“Good god, Rosalia, that guy is the biggest blowhard on the island.”

“True, but he’s really a fascinating man. For the last 24 years he’s been recording everything that’s happened on the island. Between his records and all the records Alfonso gave him, he really is a treasure trove of information. You know, J3, you ought to write down everything you can remember about all the people who’ve stayed at the beach club. It could be useful in making the history of the island complete.”

“It also might be useful in getting my neck wrung. Some things are better left unsaid, and certainly better left unwritten.”

“You mean like the story behind the picture in the lobby of Marilyn Monroe?” she laughed.

“A perfect example. Well, I’m glad you’re enjoying Father Joe. God knows you’re the only person on the island who does.”

“I confine our discussions to history. Otherwise you’re right. He really is a *cabron*. I try to keep him focused, but he can’t help himself. Today he was predicting we’ll soon be in a world wide depression.”

“That’s my boy Joe,” I said.

“He also said he’s concerned about the appearance that you and I are living in sin, and he offered to hear my confession.”

“Sin is something Father Joe knows quite well. I’m afraid if he were to hear your confession it would only give him some new ideas.”

After we stopped laughing, she looked at me with concern.

“How are your problems coming along at Caribbean Traders?”

“I sure wish Mr. Solomon were alive. The way I’m feeling, I’d go back to work for him in a flash.”

“I don’t want to pry, J3, but can I do anything to help?”

“Not unless you want to spend a few days in the warehouse trying to figure out why our inventory doesn’t match our records.”

And so she did. For four days, she counted, recounted and triple-counted every item in the place. We were missing over two million dollars worth of product, and I was looking for the second time at the very real possibility of bankruptcy. Not a pretty picture. On Friday, April 9, she walked into my office without knocking, since she now had full run of the place.

“I think I know what’s happened, J3.”

“Are you serious?”

“Yes, I am. How long have you been using the Wharton shipping line out of Antigua?”

“Oh, at least 20 years. Maybe longer. But we don’t ship very much with them. Frankly, the guy who runs it out of here, Felix Wharton, is a pretty bad actor. He’s apparently the grandson of the original founder of the line. Normally he’d be running things, but his own family dislikes him so much that for the last ten or twelve years he’s been their agent on San Felipe. He got himself arrested a few years back in Jamaica for writing hot checks. The family made good on the checks and bailed him out. After all, shipping in the Caribbean is a pretty small community, and they wanted to maintain their good name. Nonetheless, Felix still did a stint in the Kingston can, but it didn’t seem to have any impact on him. He’s still a snake. I wouldn’t trust him as far as I could throw him.”

“Exactly,” Rosalia said. “J3, I think for the last ten years, your friend Mr. Wharton has been slowly but surely skimming inventory from you.”

“How can that be? That’s ridiculous. Everything is accounted for.”

“Well, actually it isn’t. To be honest with you, J3, you’re not running a very tight ship here. Problem is, you’re seldom here, and when you are, you don’t pay enough attention to the details. You need some controls – some checks and balances.”

“Come on. We make a lot of money. We sell a lot of product.”

“And you spend a lot of money and you buy a lot of product, and everything is just thrown into one big pot: apparel, the hotel, the seaplane line. Do you own a coffee plantation in Guatemala?” She frowned.

“Sure. Where do you think San Felipe Supremo comes from?”

“You realize there are no records showing how much you paid for the place? And based on the annual production figures, it would appear to be a very large plantation with a lot of employees, but there aren’t any clear cut records.”

I cleared my throat defensively. “Well, it’s – it’s not easy to explain,” I stammered. “Don Padrone bought it back in ’46 right after the war, and I bought it from him in either ’51 or ’52. I don’t remember, but it’s been a good investment, young lady. It’s been a good investment.”

“How do you know if you don’t keep any records?”

“I run this business like Mr. Solomon did. I keep all the records in my head.”

“And that,” she said, “was 30 years ago. And from what you’ve told me, Mr. Solomon was always in his office. J3, you’re never here. You’re flying all over the world, playing with your seaplanes, playing golf with presidents, plotting coups and god knows what else. And in your spare time, you’re deflowering impressionable young women,” she giggled. “Face it, J3, you’re a charming dilettante.”

“All right, all right,” I roared. “You’ve made your point. When you’re right, you’re right. But tell me about my missing inventory.”

“Well, it’s easy. Every time the Wharton steamship company picks up something, they give you a short count on the manifest. Nobody checks. You know everything in the apparel industry is based on dozens or half dozens. If you load 120 cartons of shirts on the ship, Wharton gives you back a manifest saying they received 114 cartons. And Felix Wharton gets away with six cartons of shirts. At 72 shirts in a carton, that’s 432 shirts. It doesn’t sound like much, but at five dollars each, wholesale, that’s \$2,160. Do that twice a week for ten years, and it’s over two million dollars, J3.”

“I’ll be go-to-hell. That slimy bastard. Are you certain about this, Rosalia?”

“I’m positive. I went back and spot-checked a hundred transactions, and I’m absolutely sure that’s what’s happened. Every time there’s been a shipment on the Wharton steamship line, their manifest does not match your original shipping document. But since it wasn’t a large amount, your people at the warehouse – who, by the way, are overworked and need more help – simply accepted Wharton’s word. And why not? There’s no problem with any of the other shipping lines. It wasn’t a large amount in any transaction. Just slow and steady.”

I started to get up.

“Where are you going, J3?”

“Oh, I think I’ll grab Nunzio and we’ll go pay a little visit on our dear friend, Felix. You’re absolutely certain about this?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, that’s good enough for me. Why don’t I meet you at Alfonso’s around six?”

Nunzio could be a handy guy to have as a friend, particularly in circumstances like this. He’d shown up in San Felipe in 1945 with a bag of cash, and immediately started the island’s one and only jitney service. Next to Alfonso, Nunzio was the best-informed man on the island. You run the only jitney service in a place like San Felipe and you know everything. I mean everything.

Nunzio never told anyone his family name, and no one ever asked. You don’t ask a guy like Nunzio any personal questions. He had a very severe scar on his left cheek, and I’m not talking a cute little Heidelberg dueling scar. I never asked him about that either. No, all I know about Nunzio is what I learned from a friend of mine in Interpol a few years back.

Turns out he was born around 1913 in Sicily as Nunzio Gliosi, and by the time he was 15 years old, had dropped out of school, dropped his family name and was working full time for the Cosa Nostra. As best as anyone could determine, Nunzio was a specialist in “accounts receivable.” I don’t know what he did, and frankly I don’t want to know. During World War II Nunzio switched allegiances and had become a committed member of the Italian Resistance specializing in the same odd jobs he’d performed so well in Sicily.

By the time the Allies had landed in Italy in January of 1944, Nunzio was a man with a real problem. He had managed to get himself crossways with his original sponsors in Sicily, and Mussolini’s Fascist government was looking for him. From an actuarial standpoint, he would’ve been hard pressed to find someone to sell him an insurance policy. Unlike my old friend Alfonso who found himself in similar circumstances years earlier in Mexico, Nunzio was totally lacking in common sense given the situation. He stayed in Italy. He proved invaluable to the Allied war effort. You’ll remember Mussolini was executed by the partisans on April 28, 1945, at Dongo on Lake Como. If you look real carefully at the pictures and the films, you’ll see that the guy who actually pulled the plug on Mussolini looks remarkably like a younger Nunzio.

Well, later on in the year he showed up here. It must’ve been November or December of 1945. I wouldn’t say we’re close friends. I don’t think Nunzio has any close friends. But I pride myself on spotting talent, and Nunzio has been a handy man to have around on more than one occasion. In fact, if I hadn’t had Nunzio with me in Haiti back in ’63, well, I don’t even want to think about it.

From the look on his face, Felix Wharton III was none too pleased to see Nunzio and me stroll into his office.

“Why, J3, what a pleasant surprise. How can I help you?” he said, ignoring Nunzio.

“Felix, my boy, we have a real problem.”

“Oh? I can’t imagine what that would be.”

“Well, let me see if I can enlighten you. The way I see it, Felix, you owe me, and I’m just going to make this a round number since I really don’t have the time to calculate exact interest. Let’s just call it two and a half million dollars.”

“And why would I owe you two and a half million dollars, if you don’t mind my asking?”

“No, I don’t mind at all. The reason you owe me two and a half million dollars is that’s roughly what you’ve stolen from me over the years. With interest, tax, tips and carrying charges, it’s probably substantially more, but I’ve always been far too generous a man and I’m willing to settle for less rather than engage in protracted negotiations.”

By now Felix’s fabulous Caribbean tan had given way to a stricken pallor.

“You see, Felix, I know all about how you’ve been skimming merchandise out of my warehouses by handing me short counts, so I think it would be in your best interest to call Antigua and have them wire the two and a half million to me in the next 24 hours. Naturally, I’ll provide you with all the wire transfer information so there’s no delay.”

“This is insane,” Wharton snarled. “You can’t prove a damn thing. If you think you have a problem, sue me. I’ll see you in court. Feel free to pick your venue – Panama or Antigua. You don’t have a chance either way. Remember, all our ships are registered in Panama, and I don’t believe a court in Antigua would believe a word of your wild accusations.”

“Felix, I was afraid you might want to turn a straightforward business deal into an unpleasant situation. That’s why I brought Nunzio along. Nunzio, why don’t you outline for Felix the various options available for dealing with this unpleasant circumstance.”

And so, *sotto voce*, Nunzio did. In excruciating and graphic detail. When he concluded, the sweat was rolling off Wharton like Niagara Falls, despite the efficient hum of the window air conditioning unit in his office.

“It’s – it’s gonna take me a few days to raise this kind of money.”

“No problem at all, Felix. In the meantime, we’ll just delay the departure of your ship that’s currently in the harbor.”

“You can’t do that. That’s a twenty five million dollar vessel.”

“Then I guess I’m fully collateralized. I’ll expect the money in my account no later than the close of business on Tuesday. Here’s the wire transfer information.”

“Look here,” Wharton protested. “You can’t seize that ship. You’ll be violating Panamanian law.”

“Really. You seem to be forgetting who I am, Felix. I can do just about anything I want on San Felipe. Oh, and Felix, after this messy business is concluded, you might want to consider relocating to another venue. But not before I have my money.”

At six o’clock I met Rosalia at Alfonso’s. The place was packed with its usual Friday night regulars, plus the crew of the Wharton steamer Deliverance, who were delighted with their unexpected shore leave and the fact that all their drinks were on the house.

By Tuesday, two-point-one million dollars had been wired into my account along with a promissory note for four hundred thousand dollars, which my attorney Davis Andrews had prepared. It carried nominal interest charges and was secured by a lien on Wharton Shipping Company assets. Felix’s family needed a few extra months to pay off the full amount Felix had stolen, and I was agreeable to giving it to them.

“There’s one other little thing,” Andrews said over the phone from London.

“Oh?”

“Yes, it seems the family would prefer that you bundle up old Felix on the Deliverance tomorrow morning, rather than letting the poor chap just leave the island with no particular place to go. Apparently the warm bosom of his family awaits him in Antigua, and I think it’s delightfully ironic that the ship’s name is Deliverance.”

“Andrews, tell the Wharton family nothing would please me more than to accommodate their request.”

So on Wednesday morning, April 14, we bundled up Felix as requested and turned him over to the surly and very hung over crew of the Deliverance. A group of San Felipe's finest citizens along with Nunzio, Alfonso, Rosalia and me stood on the edge of the wharf to bid a trembling Felix Wharton a fond adieu. When Father Joe blessed the voyage and prayed for a safe journey, I knew Felix was in big trouble.

With Caribbean Traders now flush with cash and the prospects for another four hundred thousand dollars in a few months, things were starting to get back to normal. I was feeling so good, and was so confident of the future, I decided to do something I'd been thinking about for the last several weeks. I asked Rosalia to be my wife.

On Saturday, April 24, 1965, we were married at the Caribbean Traders Beach Club by none other than a slightly inebriated Father Joe. It turned out to be an island-wide party with everyone turning up to wish us well and kiss the beaming bride. Everyone agreed it was the best thing that ever happened to this old Okie. Rosalia was 24 and I was 57, but I felt like a teenager again.

The next morning we took off on our honeymoon to stay on the undeveloped north coast of the Dominican Republic, where I had a little beach house I'd acquired several years earlier in another one of those complicated deals that made perfect sense to me and totally baffled Rosalia.

As we lifted off in my prized '47 Grumman Goose, I knew I was starting another one of life's passages. I just didn't realize all the places it would take me.

Chapter Nine

* * * *

Passages

The flight over to the Dominican Republic was just the way you want a flight to be – unremarkable – and Rosalia and I spent the first few days of our honeymoon eating great *cangrejo guisado*, sleeping late, catching up on our reading and generally just relaxing and enjoying each other's company.

We listened to *merengue* for hours on end, and even drove over to Samana, where I showed her its historic church. It had been built by black Americans from Philadelphia who migrated to the Dominican Republic in the 1840s. With its tall steeple and slate roof, it looked like something you'd see in a small New England town.

With the crisis passed at Caribbean Traders, Rosalia and I were carefree and content. It was perfect serenity, and I knew it couldn't last for long. Sure enough, it didn't.

When I say a '47 Grumman Goose can get you out of a tight spot, I know what I'm talking about. As I said, Rosalia and I were staying at my little beach house on the north coast of the Dominican Republic, where we had docked the Goose. About 11:30 on the night of April 28, the phone rang and the voice at the other end boomed, "J3, what the hell are you doing in the Dominican? I've just ordered in the marines."

"Lyndon," I asked, "why would you want to do such a damn fool thing?"

"Cause the commies are taking over. I want you to fly down to Santo Domingo right now and let me know what's happening. American lives are in danger."

I could think of two lives in danger thanks to this call, which undoubtedly was tapped. So Rosalia and I made a beeline for the Goose. Just as the engines turned over, a group of Dominican soldiers came running down the beach, guns blazing. They hit the Grumman maybe two dozen times, including the port engine, but the old Goose took off like our lives depended on it, which they did. Try that in one of today's sissy planes.

We limped into Turks Island and got a room at a little inn I know there. About 4 in the morning, the night clerk knocked on the door, all excited. "Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Jefferson. The President of the United States is on the telephone downstairs for you!"

They only had one phone for the entire place.

"Is that a fact? Well," I said, handing him a C-note, "tell him I checked out with no forwarding address."

Susan would've been appalled at my dodging a phone call from the President, but not Rosalia.

"No forwarding address?" she giggled. "You told the President of the United States you had no forwarding address?"

"Well, it was either that or take his call," I shrugged, "in which case he would've demanded I fly back to Santo Domingo and report in to him every ten or fifteen minutes. I've known Lyndon since 1948, when he was first elected to the Senate⁽¹⁾, and what you have to understand is that Lyndon is extremely focused when it comes to his own agenda. He wouldn't give a tinker's dam that

he was putting me in harm's way, or that it was our honeymoon. He may be the world's most powerful man, but frankly he's a constant pain in the ass."

"You don't like him?" Rosalia asked.

"Oh, no, I like Lyndon fine. Hell, I've known him for more than 15 years now and he kind of grows on you. He gets right up into your face and grabs your lapel and puts his nose next to yours and says, 'The President of the United States needs your help.' A whole different style of politicking than Jack, who was a hell of a lot smoother and a hell of a lot more sophisticated than Lyndon'll ever be, but not anywhere near as shrewd.

"He sure knows where the bodies are buried in Congress and how to get legislation passed like nobody you've ever met before. As long as he keeps the United States out of some damn fool war – well, believe it or not Lyndon Baines Johnson, with all his faults, could go down in history as one of the country's greatest presidents. And for that reason, I don't mind doing favors for him. But I'll be go-to-hell if I'm gonna fly into Santo Domingo in the middle of what's shaping up to be a war, and cancel our honeymoon to boot, just to satisfy Lyndon's curiosity. No, I'm afraid this time Lyndon'll have to use his 'your president needs your help' line on somebody else.

"Now come over here and give this beat-up old bush pilot a kiss, would you?"

"But of course, Mr. Jefferson, whatever you wish."

Rosalia was right, of course, about me – I was more of a dilettante than a director general of what was becoming quite a large enterprise. Caribbean Traders now had production facilities throughout the Caribbean and Central America, a coffee plantation in Guatemala, scheduled and chartered seaplane service all over the region, a hotel, finishing and warehouse facilities in San Felipe, and warehouses in Houston and New Orleans. Davis Andrews was encouraging me to take some of the money we recovered from Felix Wharton and invest in a sales office and warehouse in London, with the idea of expanding into Europe.

It all sounded good to me, except I just didn't have the time to devote to all of it. As long as I've got gas for my seaplane and a couple thousand dollars in my pocket, I've always found it a lot more interesting and fun to run around and get involved with the people and events that help shape the world. Sitting at a desk from nine to five pushing papers is not my idea of fun.

Rosalia, on the other hand, was fascinated by it all. She enjoyed it as a new challenge – installing systems and procedures, tracking where things came in and went out, profit and loss, cash flow, balance sheets. She ate it up. And, by god, I sure let her, since I didn't really want anything to do with it myself. She spent her days working on this stuff, and slowly but surely she started taking over running the day-to-day operations of Caribbean Traders. With each change, she made it a better company – made it what it is today.

While I was off "playing golf with presidents," as she liked to put it, she was a whirlwind of activity. She flew all over the region, meeting with our production managers, interviewing them, making sure they were managing in the company's best interests. During these visits she also talked to the regular workers. She had tremendous empathy with them. She wanted them to make a fair wage and be treated fairly.

Woe be to the managers who didn't agree with her on these issues – or anything else of importance, for that matter. All the fellows back then who managed those plants were cronies of mine. And when I showed up to inspect a facility, I'll confess I spent more time sipping on a rum and Coke or a martini with 'em, swapping stories and reminiscing about old times, than I did trying to figure out if the plant was making a profit. That wasn't Rosalia's approach. She'd bore right in, check the books, check the manifests. Some of the fellows left, a couple voluntarily, others involuntarily. Through it all, Rosalia followed a consistent, methodical approach to running the

business. You'd have to say she had the right idea and made the right decisions, because our profits increased steadily, and everyone agreed she made it a better place to work.

Rosalia also hired more people at the warehouse here in San Felipe, which of course was one of the reasons we'd gotten in such financial trouble in the first place, by not having enough people to check things. Rosalia not only increased the workers' wages, she also started a company-wide employee benefits program, including health insurance for the workers and their families, and a generous retirement program.

It was Rosalia who brought the first computer to San Felipe. It was a great big thing called an IBM 360 mainframe. It was a wonder to behold, all sorts of blinking lights and whirling tapes. I didn't much care for it, but we used it to automate our passenger airline reservation system. Up 'til then, we'd just used loose leaf paper in three-ring binders.

In a few years, Caribbean Traders had managed to substantially increase sales and improve quality, lower our prices, raise wages and, most remarkable of all, increase our profits. Hell, she even figured out the exact cost of the deal I made with Don Padrone to buy the coffee plantation. Turns out on a dollar-and-cents basis it might not have been as good a deal as I'd thought.

Rosalia also hired Manford to come in and run the beach club. The best hostellers in the world are the Swiss, and Manford was one of the best of the best. In no time at all, he had the place running like a Swiss watch – you'll pardon the expression. Rosalia and Manford worked together to upgrade the beach club. They brought in Pierre to run the kitchen full time, expanded the wine cellar, improved all the services.

One night while we were having dinner on the verandah of the house, she smiled at me and asked, "J3, do you know how many of your friends currently experiencing 'temporary cash flow problems' are living, eating and drinking at the beach club as your guests?"

"Oh, I don't know. What? Three or four, I guess."

"Nineteen, J3. They're currently tying up one of the presidential suites, three of the one-bedroom suites and six deluxe rooms."

"Well, all of our rooms are deluxe, so that's a nit." Jeez, I thought to myself, nineteen. How can that be? I'd always run the beach club as a fancy guest house. People were always coming and going, and I was always inviting people. But I didn't realize quite how many people I'd invited over the years. Well, that's one of the problems you have when you're a generous soul.

"I will say this, J3. You do associate with a classy lot. All of them have excellent taste in food and wine. Nothing but the best for your friends. Indeed, nothing but the very best."

I cleared my throat. "So you think our hospitality may be a little excessive?"

"All I know is that you give away enough Beluga caviar and Taittinger to support the school system here in San Felipe."

"Ouch."

"I know you love entertaining these people, J3, and you've been there to help a lot of them when they've needed it, and I love you for that generosity of spirit. But maybe you could reduce the number of charity cases and restrict them to ordering the chef's special of the day."

She flashed me that irresistible smile of hers.

"Good god, woman, you're ruining this place," I said in mock dismay.

She was right, of course. Over the years, I had gotten a little carried away about giving people free room and board. I should have learned my lesson when I didn't charge Susan and her cousin for their first visit. Unlike Susan, Rosalia was very sensible when it came to money. For example, she was stuck with a bunch of European furniture she didn't particularly like. But instead of replacing it, she just rearranged and re-upholstered and brought in a lot of flowers. All the flowers you see around here were her idea. She had the walls repainted and put in new lighting, and before you know it the house had taken on this nice warm Caribbean flavor you see today. Same holds true for the hotel.

While she was doing all this, I had more time to pursue my interests, namely traveling around, meeting with people, offering help and advice, and spreading the word about Caribbean Traders. I loved it, and I love Rosalia for bringing some discipline in a very gentle and warm manner to an enterprise that had been lacking it for too long.

Another way in which she was different from Susan is that Rosalia loved traveling with me, even if it didn't involve a state dinner. I can't tell you the amount of fun we had visiting and exploring different islands and countries throughout the region. We never once, as a couple that is, went to Europe. She had absolutely no interest. She did love visiting Washington, and seldom missed a trip when I had to go there. She always used the opportunity to subtly lobby the powers that be – including Presidents Johnson and Nixon, to say nothing of half the Congress – on the merits of statehood for Puerto Rico, which remained her passion.

And wherever she went, Rosalia charmed everyone she met with her warm, inviting smile and manner. She was one of a kind, my Rosalia.

Nineteen-seventy-three was shaping up to be a banner year at Caribbean Traders. Davis Andrews, now Sir Davis, had resigned his partnership in the prestigious London law firm of Middleberg, Tweed, Andrews and Crump on January 1 to assume the full time position of Caribbean Traders general manager for Europe. Several years earlier, at his and Rosalia's urgings, I had agreed to expand our presence in Europe. Although I was reluctant to expand into Europe, it was turning into a success far beyond any of our expectations.

I guess I shouldn't have been surprised. Over the years, I had come to rely on Andrews' wise counsel and advice for all manner of things. A more decent and honest human being you'd be hard pressed to find, and although I didn't see him often I talked to him frequently on the phone and considered him one of my best friends. He and his wife, Penelope, now Lady Andrews, had grown particularly fond of Rosalia over the eight years we'd been married. During their infrequent visits to San Felipe, we'd insist they stay at our house, and the four of us would have "a jolly good time," as Andrews would say.

On Saturday, June 16, I placed a call to Andrews in London.

"There's been a slight change of plans, Davis."

"Oh, how's that?"

"Well, as you Brits would say, I'm afraid I've made 'a bit of a hash' of our plans. I know we were supposed to meet this coming Thursday in London, but Echeverria⁽²⁾ is supposed to be in Puerto Vallarta on Friday to dedicate a new school. He's hosting a small dinner that evening and wants to talk to me about some things, which he claims are urgent. Something about a message he wants me to deliver to Kissinger about Dr. Allende."⁽³⁾

"The Marxist president of Chile?" Andrews inquired.

"One and the same, old boy. One and the same. In any event, Rosalia is up in Houston getting her annual physical at the Houston Medical Center, and visiting the warehouse there. Here's what might be fun. I was going to meet her on Wednesday the 20th in Puerto Vallarta. I thought you and Penelope could join us there instead of me going to London. BOAC has a flight that'll get you in on Wednesday afternoon about the same time Rosalia's flight is due in from Houston. You and I can still have our meeting on Thursday, and I'm sure I could swing an invitation for the two of you to attend the dinner.

"I've rented a big villa in Gringo Gulch right down the street from Liz and Dick's old place by the way, so there'll be plenty of privacy. You and I can get our business done and have some fun in the process. What do you say?"

"Bloody good," Andrews replied. "I'm sure Penelope will be agreeable. And it's a perfect time to get out of London, what with all you American tourists around."

“Great. Book your flight and leave the rest to me. I’ll see you Wednesday afternoon. All my love to Penelope.”

“Excellent,” said Andrews. “See you Wednesday and give our love to Rosalia when you talk to her.”

When I arrived at the Puerto Vallarta airport it was even more chaotic than usual. “What a mess,” I thought to myself, thankful my private plane allowed me to avoid these mob scenes.

I walked over to the arrival board to see what, if anything, was happening. Davis and Penelope’s connecting Eastern Airlines flight from Miami was scheduled to arrive on time, and Rosalia’s Aero Mexico flight from Houston was delayed. “Typical,” I thought. I wished Rosalia had taken my advice and flown in the fancy new Gulfstream executive jet I’d purchased in February. You can only land a seaplane in San Felipe. So I keep the Gulfstream on Grand Cayman Island, which is less than an hour flight by seaplane from San Felipe.

Always concerned about money, Rosalia had said, “No, J3, that’s your toy.”

“No,” I protested, “It’s our toy. I can have the crew drop me off in Puerto Vallarta after I’m finished in Guatemala, then fly to Houston to pick you up.”

“J3, do you know how much it costs to fly that plane each hour?”

“Well, no, not really.”

“Trust me. It’s a lot. No, it’s easier for me to fly commercial. Believe me, J3, you’ve got expensive habits,” she admonished over the phone.

“All right. I’ll meet you at the Puerto Vallarta airport.”

So there I stood, looking at the chaos and pandemonium around me. I was deciding to grab an Aero Mexico official to find out why Rosalia’s flight was delayed, when I felt a tap on my shoulder.

“Mr. Jefferson?”

“Yes,” I replied, turning around.

“Would you come with me, please, sir?” he asked, flashing a card that identified him as Col. Hugo Carbajal, a member of President Echeverria’s security detail. He was a plump, pleasant enough chap with a weary smile.

“Certainly, colonel. What is it?”

He led me into a small, windowless office behind the ticket counter.

“Cigarette?” he asked, closing the door.

“No. No thanks. I’ve finally managed to kick the habit. Well, colonel, what is it? Why all the mystery?”

He averted my eyes. “I’m afraid I have some terrible news for you, Mr. Jefferson. The Aero Mexico flight carrying your wife crashed on approach. There appear to be no survivors.”

Andrews said I’d been in the hospital for two days when we finally spoke. I’m sure he was right. Apparently, I’d collapsed with a heart seizure after hearing the news. Well, I was 66, and sometimes the shock of hearing something so unexpected can overwhelm your system, no matter how healthy you might be. I really couldn’t believe or comprehend what had happened. Now here I was in the Intensive Care Unit of Puerto Vallarta Hospital Central. From what I could gather from Davis, Col. Carbajal had saved my life. He immediately administered CPR – he was, after all, part of the president’s security team – and had arranged for a swift military escort to the Hospital Central.

Upon his arrival, Andrews had taken charge of the situation. Although the doctors and nurses in Puerto Vallarta were totally qualified and wonderfully sympathetic, Andrews immediately dispatched the Gulfstream to Houston to pick up an entire cardiac care team from Houston Medical Center.

“You’ll be fine,” Davis assured me. “The team from Houston will stay for another couple of days, but you’re doing well. They say you’ll be able to return to a complete and full schedule in a short while.”

“Tell me what happened to Rosalia, Davis.”

“J3, we really shouldn’t be talking about this in your condition.”

“Tell me what happened to her. Please.”

“She’s dead, J3.”

“I know. But what happened?”

He simply handed me a clipping from the New York Times. The Aero Mexico DC-9 had crashed on approach. All 22 passengers and five crew members died, and it looked like a case of pilot error.⁽⁴⁾

“I’m sorry, J3,” he said in a trembling voice.

Six days later I walked out into the brilliant sunshine of Puerto Vallarta. I’d been heavily sedated during my hospital stay, but this morning I refused to take any more sedatives. I was leaning slightly on Andrews’ arm as we approached the limousine, which was surrounded by a squad of Mexican military police. They would escort us on the short ride to the airport, and we would soon be back on San Felipe, by way of Grand Cayman Island.

“Davis,” I asked, “is there a synagogue in Puerto Vallarta?”

“Yes, I believe there is,” he answered. “Why?”

“Tell the driver I’d like to stop there before we go to the airport.”

“Certainly, J3. But why?”

“Oh, it’s just something I need to do every 35 years or so when a part of my soul is torn apart and destroyed.”

And so, for the second time in my life, I spent an afternoon in a Jewish synagogue.

Chapter Ten

* * * *

Haiti

When I say a DC-3 Skytrain can land you in deep voodoo, I know what I'm talking about. One day in March of '63, I flew one of our Army surplus DC-3s to a remote landing strip in the middle of Haiti to deliver a cargo of "duty-free merchandise" to one of the small resistance groups fighting the repressive regime of Papa Doc Duvalier. Damn near got killed for my trouble.

Two things saved me that day. The first was the DC-3, which can just about land and take off on a postage stamp. The only thing more reliable than a DC-3 is the second thing that saved me – Nunzio. As I've told you before, Nunzio can be a very handy guy to have along when the going gets a little tough.

We were hurrying back to the DC-3, just ahead of a couple of Papa Doc's bully boys, the Tonton Macoutes,⁽¹⁾ who were on our trail. They weren't going to settle for anything less than our heads in a burlap bag. Alternately running and hiding, we were pinned down in a patch of tall savanna grass, when we caught what turned out to be a lucky break.

Nunzio looked my way, drew his forefinger across his throat and pointed toward the Macoutes, then silently slithered away through the grass. The sweat of fear was pouring off my face and stinging my eyes, my heart thundering in my chest. The two Macoutes were no more than 50 feet away now, their AK-47s slung arrogantly over their shoulders. They were grinning menacingly at a young woman standing on the road. One Macoute was stroking her arm and speaking softly, the other smirking at her fear. They had briefly stopped their search for us, distracted by the woman.

The DC-3 – our only means of escape – was 100 yards behind me and not well hidden in a thin grove of small trees.

The Macoute suddenly pinned the woman's arms behind her back, sneering at her screams. The other Macoute began working his belt buckle. I could feel the woman's terror in my stomach.

"You pig," Nunzio screamed as he burst from hiding and fired. The Macoute slowly collapsed, his hands still on his belt buckle.

Instinctively, I leaped up extending my arm. The Colt .38 exploded in my hand, its bullet flying far from its mark.

"You fucking pig," Nunzio was screaming as he crashed into the second Macoute, who had released his grip on the woman and was reaching for his rifle. I ran forward wildly, blind fury replacing my fear, pumping my legs, focusing my mind. The last thing the Macoute ever heard was Nunzio, his face contorted with white-hot anger. "You think you're a man?"

It didn't have to be this way with Haiti. But Edmund Burke⁽²⁾ had it right: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." And Papa Doc Duvalier and his son were pure evil.

Now you may not believe it, doctor, but at one time Haiti was the most prosperous colony in the New World.⁽³⁾ It accounted for two-thirds of France's overseas trade, producing sugar, coffee, cotton and indigo. The trade between Haiti and France employed 15,000 French sailors. But it was a horrible and repressive slave-based economy, with unspeakable acts of brutality on the part of the French plantation owners.⁽⁴⁾

In 1791, the slaves rose up under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture⁽⁵⁾ and eventually formed the first black republic in the world on January 1, 1804. Toussaint never lived to see the birth of independent Haiti, thanks to the duplicity of the French – which is something you can always count on.

Well, unfortunately the young, struggling, black republic of Haiti was sold out by everyone: the United States, the English, the French, the Spanish, even the Germans. No one was prepared to help Haiti, because it was run by blacks. But everyone was all too willing to exploit both the country and its long line of corrupt, incompetent leaders.

In no time at all, Haiti had reverted into a society of corrupt and privileged leaders supported by self-serving and insensitive foreign powers, all balanced on the back of a serf-like society that would've made Czar Nicholas⁽⁶⁾ as proud as hell.

Now believe it or not, when Francois Duvalier won a democratic election for the presidency of Haiti on September 22, 1957, I was ecstatic! That's right. Duvalier was a medical doctor who'd been trained by the United States in the treatment of yaws.⁽⁷⁾ It would be difficult to overstate the horror of that disease. Duvalier, with U.S. support, spent years in the isolated Haitian countryside, treating and curing literally thousands of people of that terrible disease. The people voted for him in the mistaken belief he could cure the country of its many ills.

Papa Doc was insane beyond a doubt, just like his mother before him. The reign of terror he inflicted on his countrymen was so horrible I'd prefer not to go into it. Let's just say by 1960 it was obvious to any right-thinking and decent person that this man had to go – and I use the word “man” advisedly. He was really a monster.⁽⁸⁾

About that time I became actively involved in helping any faction that wanted to get rid of Papa Doc. Jack Kennedy hated him, and vowed to destroy him, which he would've done, if he'd lived long enough. Jack had orchestrated O.A.S. and international pressure against the Duvalier regime, and it was only a matter of time before it would've crumbled.⁽⁹⁾

On November 22, 1963, when Jack was assassinated, Duvalier and his crowd celebrated Kennedy's death. Duvalier even claimed credit for it, saying he'd killed Jack with black magic. Papa Doc's electoral victory on September 22, 1957, had convinced him “22” was his magic number.

Unfortunately, Lyndon didn't continue Jack's policy. In 1966, he restored the flow of American aid to Haiti that Jack had stopped in 1962. Needless to say, Duvalier never used the money to help his people, but rather enriched himself and bought the loyalty of the Tonton Macoutes, whom he needed to stay in power. I did what I could, as did many other individuals, but without the support of the United States, I couldn't do much beyond delivering some “duty-free merchandise” to the dissidents, in the hope they could somehow stop the atrocities.

Now when I say the United States wasn't helpful, I know what I'm talking about. Lyndon wouldn't hear it whenever I'd try to tell him Duvalier had to go. Nixon couldn't have cared less, and his national security advisor and later secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, didn't give a horse's heinie if someone was engaging in barbarous acts against their own people.⁽¹⁰⁾ To their way of thinking, any despot was all right, as long as he was an anti-communist despot.

The height of the absurdity of all this, though, was reached in 1969, when Nelson Rockefeller showed up in Port-au-Prince on July 1. He was governor of New York at the time. The Macoutes herded about 30,000 Haitians onto the front lawn of the presidential palace to wave and cheer as he and Papa Doc appeared on the balcony arm-in-arm and waving back to the crowd. Papa Doc couldn't have been happier. No amount of money could've bought him that kind of propaganda, and old Nelson Rockefeller gave it to him for free. A couple years later, Rockefeller told a congressional committee that, you know, he might have been wrong, but “there were 30,000 people out front. If you're a politician, your natural instinct is to respond.”⁽¹¹⁾

Even better than Rockefeller was Clinton E. Knox – excuse me, *Dr. Clinton E. Knox* – arguably one of the dumbest sons of bitches who ever walked the earth. Knox became the U.S.

ambassador to Haiti, and loved telling journalists what a great leader Papa Doc was, and how much he'd done for the Haitians. I once asked the ambassador at a reception I attended at his official residence in Port-au-Prince what he thought the benefits were to the estimated 50,000 people Papa Doc had murdered at Fort Dimanche⁽¹²⁾ alone. He just muttered something about anti-communists and overblown press reports, and smiled vapidly. I found myself wishing that instead of me being in the reception line, it had been Nunzio.

Oh, and did I mention the best part about Clinton Knox, the great statesman and freedom fighter? Clinton Knox was a black man. It would be hard to invent a sorrier story than that.

Well, finally on April 21, 1971, Papa Doc Duvalier died of a massive heart attack while he was eating his supper in bed. The next day, his 19-year-old son, Jean-Claude,⁽¹³⁾ replaced the old man as "President for Life," an absurdity beyond comprehension. To my way of thinking, it would've been the perfect time to send in the Marines, clean out the place and stop the incredible slaughter of human beings. But those suggestions fell on deaf ears in Washington during the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy era. Instead, Clinton Knox showed up at the inaugural, wearing a lapel pin showing the American and Haitian flags crossed in friendship. Amazing.

Nunzio and I and others slugged on in a futile attempt to get rid of Jean-Claude, now known as Baby Doc. It wasn't just me who wanted to see the bastard go, you understand. No, far from it. I was just a bit player in all of this. There were a lot of good and decent people who wanted to stop this bloodbath, and who spoke out eloquently and passionately about it. Black Americans, white Americans, Christians, Jews, conservatives and liberals. But without the support of the U.S. government, every well-intentioned effort to bring down this monstrosity was doomed to failure.

The reign of terror continued under Baby Doc, but thanks to the regrettable success of his public relations spin-doctors, the world community for the most part believed Baby Doc was presiding over a kinder, gentler regime. Truth is, conditions for the Haitian people actually deteriorated during Baby Doc's rule.

Now I hated the Duvaliers for the ruthless murderers they were, but I have to say the old man, at least, was pretty smart. He knew how to manipulate people. He used terror as an instrument, and he reveled in the exercise of power. He once said the ultimate proof of power was the ability to take someone's life. Makes you shudder.

I knew him only in passing, and only because we have a small Caribbean Traders factory in Haiti. We don't really need a plant there, but, hell, it provides 150 jobs at wages that are spectacular by Haitian standards. We have a company doctor for our employees and their families, and we run a little school at the plant. So at least our employees' children get medical care, a hot meal every day and an honest education.

What is the spectacular wage we pay each of our employees in Haiti, you ask? I'm embarrassed to tell you. About five bucks a day. Not an hour. A day.

I'm sorry you had to cool your heels for a few extra days here in San Felipe, doctor, but I couldn't pass up the chance of a lifetime to go explain to Baby Doc the time had finally come for him to leave Haiti.

Baby Doc isn't anywhere near as smart as his old man was. In fact, he might be a dumber son of a bitch than even Clinton E. Knox. So it's no surprise that Baby Doc didn't want to go. Despots never like giving up their rule. They're always having too much fun exploiting and murdering their people. But as my old pal the Wizard of Ooze, Everett McKinley Dirksen,⁽¹⁴⁾ would say, "Once they feel the heat, they see the light." And so that's what I was doing over in Haiti while you were here – making sure Baby Doc felt the heat.

My job was to tell him exile in France with all the dough he'd stolen was the best deal he was gonna find, and he ought to take it and run while the taking and running were good.⁽¹⁵⁾ To my way of

thinking, it was a great deal for Baby Doc and a lousy deal for the people of Haiti, based on my belief the punishment should fit the crime and murderers shouldn't walk away scot free. But that's what all the powers-that-be wanted, and I was just the messenger, not the decision-maker.

As we walked through the guard of Macoutes protecting the entrance hall of the Presidential Palace in Port-au-Prince, Nunzio whispered, "Please, J3. Let me take 'em out right here." I shook my head, "no," and looked at Mike Castle, who rolled his eyes and gave me a slither of a smile.

Next thing I knew I was in Baby Doc's office, alone with the dumb bastard himself. Nunzio and Mike were standing outside with three Macoutes. I sat down in his darkened office and, as they say in the South, told him how the cow ate the cabbage.

"The time has come to leave, my friend. You won't get a better deal than the one that's being offered. The world community is against you, and the French are prepared to grant you political asylum. The United States has put an airplane at your disposal to take you and your family to France. That's as good as it's gonna get. Go now, while you still can."

"Who do they think they are? Ordering me around like some, some peasant," he thundered, "dictating the number of people I can take and the amount of luggage. They won't even let us bring guns. And they insist we go through a security scanner before we board the plane. Who do they think we are? Uncivilized animals? That is why we turned around last night on our way to the airport, and returned to the palace. No one will dictate terms to me."

He stood and pounded the desk with his fists. "I am the President-for-Life of Haiti. Do you hear me?" he shouted. "I am the President-for-Life, and I will not have you or anyone tell me what I can and cannot do!" He was screaming and sweating and throwing a tantrum like the petulant man-child he is.

"Sit down, Jean-Claude," I replied in a flat voice. "Shut up and listen. You've got two options. Number one. Get on the plane tonight and go to France. Take your goddamn guns if you want to. It's okay with me. Or option two. Wake up tomorrow morning to find that the U.S. Marines have secured your island. And believe me, I'll personally see to it that you're dead before sunset."

I was sitting in the leather chair across from his enormous desk, looking at him as calmly as I could, and I thought to myself, "Well, possibly I've overplayed my hand right here." When he reached into his right hand desk drawer and drew out a pistol and pointed it at my face, I was convinced I'd made a major tactical mistake.

In spite of everything, I maintained an air of nonchalance, my right leg draped over my left, my hands thrust deep in my pants pockets and a look of weary bemusement on my face.

"Sit down, Jean-Claude. You're in a world of trouble, and killing me isn't going to make things any better for you," I said while secretly pressing the button on the key fob I had in my right pocket. Immediately from outside the door came a series of poof-poof-poof sounds accompanied by the muffled cries of men. After what seemed an eternity, but in reality was a few short seconds, the door burst open and Nunzio and Mike spilled into the room pointing their still-smoking, silencer-equipped 9-mm pistols at Baby Doc's head.

"Well, looks like we might not have to wait 'til tomorrow, Jean-Claude," I said, trying to mask the sense of relief I felt.

"You make your point," said the sorry son of a bitch. "We will be on the plane tonight. But remember. My wife and I get to carry our guns and do not have to go through security."

"No problem, my boy," I replied, rising from the chair. "Oh, and Mr. President, it wouldn't be in anybody's best interest if you change your mind again."

Nunzio, Mike and I picked our way over the bodies of the dead Macoutes, and got the hell out of there as fast as we could.

“J3, you made a big mistake back there,” Nunzio said, peering into the back seat of the car he was driving. “We should have taken him out right there.”

“Oh, I don’t know, Nunzio,” I sighed, as we sped away from the Presidential Palace. “Let’s just leave it at this and let him get out of here. What do you think, Mike?”

Mike Castle turned around from the passenger seat and looked at me. “Somebody else said it better than I could, J3, ‘Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice.’”⁽¹⁶⁾ Then the three of us drove silently out to the airport and watched for ourselves as true evil flew out of Haiti that night.

Chapter Eleven

* * * *

Jack

I'm glad you like the picture behind the bar at Alfonso's, Dr. Livingston. It's one of my favorites, too. You want to know why Jack and I are laughing so hard at Alfonso, standing there with his arms spread wide? The photo was taken in the lobby of Burning Tree Country Club.⁽¹⁾ Jack and I had just arrived to play a quick round of golf with Alfonso, and he's greeting us with that great voice of his, "Ah, golfers. Welcome. Welcome, my friends," sounding just the way he did back at the beach shack. He always cracked up Jack.

"Alfonso's in the wrong business," he'd say. "Anyone who can say the same thing a couple of hundred times a day ought to be running for office and giving stump speeches."

I first met Jack Kennedy in 1949. He was a second-term congressman from Massachusetts who'd been elected based on his war-hero status and his father's money.⁽²⁾ Ben Bradlee, who knew him extremely well, wrote in his book, *Conversations with Kennedy*,⁽³⁾ that Jack Kennedy was the most cosmopolitan man he'd ever met. I'd have to go along with that description.

The way I came to meet him was as unconventional as so much of his life. Jack Kennedy's consuming interest was foreign affairs. He wanted to know everything and meet everyone who had anything to do with it. Thanks to old Joe, who was as rich as Croesus⁽⁴⁾, Jack could indulge his passion for foreign affairs and travel, which he started at an early age. And because of his name and his father's contacts, to say nothing of his own winning personality, he was able to meet and appraise most of the great leaders and thinkers of his time.

In my own case he just called up out of the blue, as he did with many others, and introduced himself over the phone.

"Mr. Jefferson? Hi. Jack Kennedy. Do you have a minute? My dad tells me you're the man to talk to if I want to find out what's going on in the Caribbean."

"Well, I don't know about that, Congressman. Seems to me you might want to spend a couple of minutes with Charlie Grutwilder up in Havana."

"Dad mentioned him, too. That's one of the reasons for my call. I'm going to visit Havana with George Smathers,⁽⁵⁾ and if you don't mind, I thought I'd come down and visit you in San Felipe and get a sense of your thinking about the region."

"Well, Congressman, you're more than welcome. Let me know when you plan to arrive. We just opened the Caribbean Traders Beach Club, so you've got a place to stay anytime. And, Congressman, please call me J3."

"Only if you call me Jack."

I could see I was going to like this fella.

"How did you and Congressman Smathers enjoy your time in Havana?"

"What a wild town that is, J3. Let me ask you a question. Does Charlie Grutwilder ever sleep?"

"Well, he spends a lot of time in bed."

"That's not what I asked you."

We both threw our heads back and laughed. We were standing in the middle of the San Felipe pier after he arrived on the seaplane I'd sent to fetch him.

"Listen, before we check in at the hotel, can we get something to eat?" he asked.

"Sure. What do you have a taste for?"

"Well, Charlie told me about something called *Cabrillo*.⁽⁶⁾ He insisted I try it while I'm here. Said a fellow named Alfonso makes the best there is."

So we walked over to the beach shack, where Alfonso came trotting up to us.

"*Bienvenidos*."

"Ahh, what?" Jack responded.

"Ah, a Bostonian. Welcome. Welcome, my friend," Alfonso said, escorting us to a table. "Your waitress will be with you in a moment. You look as if you might like to cool off. Would you care for some juice? A soft drink? A beer? A rum punch? A sloe gin fizz always goes well this time of day."

Jack looked at me and laughed.

"I have to say, I like his style," Jack observed. "Is that an act, or is he for real?"

"Oh, Alfonso is definitely for real, Congressman. Definitely for real."

And that was the start of a friendship and a running gag that would last for the next 14 years between a roguish saloon-keeper and one of the world's most powerful men.

"I understand Lopez Mateos⁽⁷⁾ hates your guts, J3. So I think it would be great fun for you to come with me next month on my visit. The look on his face when he sees you get off the plane will be worth the cost of the trip," he smiled mischievously.

"You're right about that, Jack. Old Adolfo wouldn't even let me in the country if it weren't for my friendship with you. I don't think it's such a hot idea for me to show up there with you. He might try to run the both of us out of town."

"Nah, he can't afford to do that. At least not on this trip. He knows if he's not nice to me and my friends, I won't let him have Chamizal."⁽⁸⁾

Jack Kennedy was in an expansive mood and clearly enjoying himself. It was twilight on one of those spectacular Spring days that make Washington incomparably beautiful. We were sitting on the Truman balcony, smoking cigars and enjoying the view across the Ellipse to the Washington Monument.

He was discussing his state visit to Mexico, coming up in May of '62. He was right, of course, about Lopez Mateos hating my guts. He also was right about Lopez Mateos' desire to get Chamizal returned to Mexico.

"For god sakes," Jack fretted. "Why do the Mexicans always invent these artificial crises? It's so, I don't know..."

"Trivial?"

"Yeah, trivial is a good word."

"Well, look at it from their point of view. They've always had a love-hate relationship with us, to say nothing of an inferiority complex. So they latch onto these little issues, and invest a lot of energy and symbolism into them. Then they always frame the solution in the context of winning a great victory over the United States."

"I suppose it's a harmless way for them to blow off some steam and maintain their self-respect."

"It might not be the basis of a sound policy toward us, Jack, but that's pretty much the nub of it."

"So tell me, J3, why is Lopez Mateos so pissed off at you?"

“Pretty simple. He and I got crossways back in ’54 when he was Ruiz Cortines’ labor minister.⁽⁹⁾ Adolfo tried to put the arm on me for the exclusive distribution rights to Caribbean Traders products in Mexico for one of his relatives. We already had distributors in Mexico who were doing fine for us, and I told Adolfo I wasn’t gonna cancel their contracts to give the business to some P.R.I.⁽¹⁰⁾ stooge. I think my exact words to him were, ‘I believe you should dance with the one who brung ya.’ He didn’t like that, but I just brushed it off. My mistake was that I ignored him, figuring he’d be gone in ’58. Who would’ve expected the secretary of labor to get the *Dedazo*.”⁽¹¹⁾

“Nobody in this town, I can assure you,” Jack said, laughing at my sad tale of unintended consequences. “And apparently nobody in Mexico City, either.”

“Right. So now I’m basically screwed. My existing distributors are having a hard time just getting our product into Mexico, let alone selling it, because I won’t pay *La Mordida*,⁽¹²⁾ nor will I switch to one of Lopez Mateos’ hand-picked lackeys. I’ll never let him share in my profits. What I can’t figure out is why he thinks he needs Caribbean Traders. He and his cronies are maintaining the great tradition of public service in Mexico. They’re stealing practically everything that isn’t bolted down.”

“What did the Spanish used to call it?” Jack asked, squeezing his eyes shut. “Oh, I remember – Ointment of Mexico.”⁽¹³⁾

Instead of exercising common sense, I took Jack up on his offer and accompanied him on his trip to Mexico City. We flew out of Andrews AFB on Air Force One.⁽¹⁴⁾ Jack Kennedy once said, “Anybody who thinks being President of the United States is the hardest job in the world has never flown on Air Force One.” It’s a great line.

I’ve been a guest on Air Force One a couple of times, and it is indeed the only way to fly. More important, though, is the symbolism of that beautiful blue, white and silver airplane with the Presidential seal on the side and “The United States of America” written on the top. It’s quite a sight, and I don’t know too many people who aren’t moved by it.

Jack’s visit to Mexico was an overwhelming success that they still talk about to this day. In a country obsessed with symbolism, he touched their hearts by kneeling before the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.⁽¹⁵⁾ He agreed to return Chamizal, thus giving Lopez Mateos the symbolic victory he needed. And, bless his soul, he put in a good word for Caribbean Traders with old Adolfo. A few months later, the prohibition against Caribbean Traders products was quietly lifted.

But as far as I was concerned, the best part of the trip was his interaction with Lopez Mateos. Here were two guys who were truly *macho simpatico*. Lopez Mateos used to collect expensive antique watches. They, along with his multiple *casa chicas*,⁽¹⁶⁾ were his pride and joy. I mentioned that to Jack on the flight down, so at the arrival ceremony at Mexico City airport, Jack took the opportunity to compliment old Adolfo on the antique wristwatch he was wearing. Adolfo didn’t miss a beat. He immediately took it off and handed it to Jack as a present.

“Mr. President, I can’t take that,” Jack said.

“No, my friend,” Adolfo replied. “In Mexico, if a friend admires something you have, it is a pleasure to give it to him as an act of friendship. This will be symbolic of the friendship between our two great countries.”

Jack agreed it would be symbolic, so he accepted the watch as testimony to the friendship of the United States and Mexico.

That night Lopez Mateos hosted a state dinner at *Los Pinos*.⁽¹⁷⁾ When we arrived, Lopez Mateos looked at me contemptuously, but he couldn’t do much about it since Jack had insisted I be invited as a member of the official party. I was standing there when the President of the United States and the First Lady arrived. Jackie Kennedy looked glamorous and beautiful. Lopez Mateos,

who had a justified reputation as a world-class ladies' man, went into his full-charm offensive. He started complimenting Jackie on how she looked, how beautiful she was, how she was even more beautiful in person than in her photos. On and on he went, until a slightly irritated Jack Kennedy looked at him and said, "Adolfo, you can have the watch back."

Jack was a frequent visitor to San Felipe over the years. We even smuggled him in twice while he was President. Frankly, that wasn't as hard as it sounds. You asked why he came here and who he saw. Well, to my way of thinking, that's nobody's business. Some things are better left unsaid. But I will tell you this one story.

In November of 1960, after he'd been elected President, Jack was staying at his father's estate in Palm Beach, attending to the myriad details of forming a government. He wanted to get away for a day, have a little privacy from the prying eyes of the press that was camped out on Worth Avenue. So early in the morning, I landed the seaplane and pulled up to the dock, where Jack, Dave Powers,⁽¹⁸⁾ and two Secret Service men jumped into the plane with great haste, and off we flew before anyone was the wiser.

Ironically, we took the direct route right over Cuba. Who would've known at the time that Cuba would come to play such a defining role in his administration.⁽¹⁹⁾ On the flight down, Jack sat in the co-pilot's seat. We chatted about all manner of things.

"Has Frank⁽²⁰⁾ talked to you yet about you and Alfonso attending the inauguration?"

"Yes, he sure has. And thanks. We'll only need a few tickets, and Frank has taken care of that. The problem is, I don't think Alfonso will be able to go."

"Oh? Why not?"

"Well, Alfonso doesn't have a passport, so it would be pretty hard for him to get a visa to come and visit the United States."

"That shouldn't be a problem. Dave, why don't you call Allen,"⁽²¹⁾ he said, turning around to look into the cabin. "See what sort of arrangements can be made."

"Don't worry, chief," Powers smirked. "Dulles is so desperate to stay on, he'll do anything."

"Don't we know it," Jack smiled.

We arrived at San Felipe about 8:30 in the morning and decided that, before Jack went about his rounds, we'd stop at Alfonso's to have a quick breakfast. As we walked in, Alfonso came trotting up.

"*Bienvenidos.*"

"What?" Jack asked with a look of mock confusion.

"Ah, a head of state. Welcome. Welcome, my friend. Your waitress will be here in a moment. You look as if you might like to cool off. Would you care for some juice? A soft drink? A beer? A rum punch? A sloe gin fizz always goes well at this time of day."

Jack Kennedy roared with laughter, and so did Alfonso. They exchanged a warm *embrazzo*. Suddenly, abruptly, Alfonso broke off and stepped back. With a look of warmth and humility I'd never seen before, and with a slight bow of his head, in a low voice choked with emotion Alfonso said, "Mr. President. A great honor, sir."

"Come on, Alfonso, cut the crap," replied the President-elect of the United States to a misty-eyed Alfonso Sanchez.

Footnotes

* * * *

Introduction, Part One: Paradise Rumored

1. Shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, a group of settlers in Mississippi declared they were an independent country, and adopted the name Wautauga Association. It consisted of no leaders and no form of government. The participants managed issues and settled disputes on an informal basis. The Wautauga Association also had no judiciary, military or police authorities. The association was short-lived – the U.S. government sent a military expedition to regain control of the Wautauga Association soon after its founding.
2. “The Company” is common parlance for the Central Intelligence Agency among its employees and other clandestine services.
3. D.S.T. is the “Direction De La Surveillance Du Territoire,” the French security services.
4. U.S. citizens cannot visit Cuba except under extraordinary circumstances. Generally the State Department only grants permission to visit Cuba to U.S. government officials, journalists, members of international or religious groups and Cuban-Americans visiting close relatives. In 1997, the most recent year for which data is available, 30,000 Cuban-Americans legally visited Cuba. Any American citizen visiting Cuba without permission may run afoul of the Trading with the Enemies Act, which provides for criminal penalties of up to ten years in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines for each violation. For those receiving permission to visit Cuba, the Treasury Department through the Office of Foreign Asset Control limits spending by U.S. citizens to a total of \$100 per day for living expenses, including lodging and food. Civil fines of up to \$55,000 per violation of this limit have been in effect since 1992. From September 1, 1994, through August 31, 1998, the Treasury Department prosecuted 379 cases of embargo violations and collected \$1.9 million in civil penalties.
5. Cuba has a number of island possessions in the Caribbean, to and from which it strictly controls access.

Introduction, Part Two: Paradise Found

1. Mexico never has recognized the U.S. embargo of Cuba, and always has maintained full commercial and diplomatic relations with Cuba and the Castro government, including daily air service between Havana and Mexico City.
2. Anyone presenting a U.S. passport upon entering Cuba receives an entry visa stamped on a separate sheet of paper, thus ensuring that a Cuban stamp does not appear on a U.S. passport.
3. Chicago’s Rosebud Restaurant, a Taylor Street landmark, allegedly was frequented by organized crime figures, including Sam Giancana, during the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s.
4. Edward R. Murrow (1908 – 1969) of CBS News was among the most influential and respected journalists of his time. It was a Murrow expose on his regular Sunday night television show that started the decline and ultimately led to the censure of Sen. Joseph McCarthy (R.-Wis.), who was known as “Tail-Gunner Joe.” McCarthy terrorized the United States with his investigations into the activities of alleged Communists, starting with the State Department and culminating with the legendary Army-McCarthy hearings. He eventually was censured by the Senate, and he died in 1957 of alcohol-related diseases. See Richard M. Fried, *Men Against McCarthy*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1976, and Richard Revere, *Senator Joe McCarthy*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1959.
5. George F. Kennan (1904 - 2005) is considered one of the most brilliant diplomatic strategists of the Cold War, and is clearly among J3’s favorites. Henry Kissinger said, “Kennan came as close to offering the diplomatic doctrine of his era as any diplomat in our history.” Kennan articulated a containment policy against the Soviets in two famous writings, to which he refers in his signed photo to J3. The first was the so-called “Long Telegram” of 1946, which Kennan sent to the State Department while serving at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. In it, he warned the U.S. government of the Kremlin’s expansionist ambitions. Kennan also wrote a scholarly article, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” which *Foreign Affairs Quarterly* published in its July 1947 edition under the anonymous byline, “X.” See Wilson Miscamrie, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947- 1950*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1992.
6. S.O.E., “Special Operations Executive,” is a highly classified unit reporting directly to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Chapter One: I Wasn't Always J3

1. Just two years before Oklahoma statehood on Nov. 22, 1905, an oil gusher blew in with a roar southeast of Tulsa. The No. 1 Ida Glenn opened the fabulous Glenn Pool and forever altered state history. By the time Oklahomans reached the eighth anniversary of statehood, Glenn Pool was known to be a giant field with reserves so vast it would help establish future multi-national companies – Getty, Gulf and Standard Oil (now Exxon) among them – and other important firms, including Sinclair and Skelly. Discovered only four years after the first territorial pipeline was laid, Glenn Pool, in the Creek Nation, overwhelmed all storage available and still-limited transportation. One of the largest fields in Oklahoma history, it would produce 325.5 million barrels of crude by 1986. As did each subsequent discovery, Glenn Pool brought hordes of boom followers: lease buyers, producers, tool suppliers, laborers, millionaires, newsmen and a transient culture that included ruffians and prostitutes.
2. Samuel Zemurray was born to a modest Russian-Jewish family in 1880. For his entire life, Zemurray spoke English and Spanish with a Russian accent. As a young man, he worked in his uncle's country store in Alabama where he met a traveling banana salesman who convinced young Zemurray to become a fruit importer. After moving to Mobile, by 1905 he had saved enough money to go to Honduras and establish the Cuyamel Banana Company. By 1910 his company had acquired 70 square miles of land in Honduras and Guatemala. In 1911 he orchestrated a plot to install a new president of Honduras by enlisting former Honduran President Manuel Poniialla and providing him the U.S.S. Hornet, a surplus U.S. Navy gunboat, plus enough funds to organize a rebel army to overthrow Miguel Davilla, the then-president of Honduras. In 1931, when J3 first visited Honduras, Zemurray was at the height of his power, running Honduras as his private fiefdom.
3. U.S. soldier of fortune Lee Christmas had been working as a locomotive engineer in Honduras when he came to prominence during one of the country's many "revolutions." His journalist friend Richard Harding Davis celebrated him in the novel *Soldiers of Fortune*.
4. O. Henry (1862 – 1910), pseudonym of William Sydney Porter, was an American short-story writer, born in North Carolina. At the age of 20, Porter moved to Texas primarily for health reasons, and worked on a sheep ranch. In 1884, Porter moved to Austin. In 1891 he became a teller with the First National Bank there. After a few years, however, he left the bank and founded the *Rolling Stone*, an unsuccessful humor weekly. Starting in 1895 he wrote a column for the Houston *Daily Post*. Meanwhile, Porter was accused of embezzling funds dating back to his employment at the First National Bank. Leaving his wife and young daughter in Austin, Porter fled to New Orleans, then to Honduras, but soon returned due to his wife's deteriorating health. She died soon afterward, and in early 1898 Porter was found guilty of the banking charges and sentenced to five years in an Ohio prison. From this low point in Porter's life, he began a remarkable comeback. Three years and about a dozen short stories later, he emerged from prison as "O. Henry" to help shield his true identity. He moved to New York City, where over the next ten years he published over 300 stories and gained worldwide acclaim as America's favorite short story writer. Porter, an alcoholic, died virtually penniless on June 5, 1910, in New York City at the age of 47.
5. The life and career of Huey Pierce Long (1893 – 1935) defy short summary. He may have captured himself best when he told reporters, "I am *suis generis* (one of a kind), just leave it at that." No other Governor in Louisiana history affected the political and social landscape like Huey Long. His impact lasted far beyond his death. Long, and his followers for 30 years after his death, pushed for an unprecedented expansion of governmental services in education, transportation and health. The anti-Longs, fiscal conservatives, opposed his plans to increase severance taxes on natural resources, to pave thousands of miles of roads, to provide free textbooks, to build a new state capitol, and to establish an extravagantly grandiose regime without sound financing. His detractors opposed Long's methods of controlling the legislature and his demagogic methods of appealing to the masses. Long's single-minded use of power not only strengthened the executive branch, it helped him achieve his goals. His highway program built almost 13,000 miles of roads. All schoolchildren received free textbooks whether the communities wanted them or not. Funding for LSU and the Port of New Orleans greatly increased. Long expanded the Charity Hospital System, built LSU Medical School and brought natural gas to New Orleans. Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1930 while still governor, Long remained in his state office until his slate of candidates took over in 1932. He brought his radical social platform of redistributing wealth to the national level and appeared to be a serious threat to President Roosevelt in the 1936 election. History, however, was deprived of such a contest. Huey Long's tumultuous career was cut short by an assassin's bullet in 1935. Shot by an assailant in a corridor of the very capitol he built, he died on September 10. Long is buried on the capitol grounds. A fascist dictator or latter day "Robin Hood," he remains in political lore the one and only "Kingfish."

Chapter Two: Living the Dream

1. It appears J3 is spreading a little mischief for his own amusement in his repeated insistences that Alfonso Sanchez “invented” guacamole dip. Indeed, guacamole in one form or another can be traced back to the ancient Incan and Mayan empires, and it is highly improbable that J3’s friend Alfonso actually created the popular version we know today, consisting of avocados, cilantro, lime and tomatoes.
2. World War II did not officially end until V-J Day, September 2, 1945, when the Japanese government signed surrender terms aboard the battleship Missouri. The German government signed unconditional surrender terms at Rheims on May 7, 1945, V-E Day.
3. Although Steiger thought he was eating bratwurst, in all probability what he actually ate was what Alfonso called “goatwurst,” sausage made from the large population of goats that inhabit San Felipe. No other logical scenario explains Alfonso’s on-the-spot ability to serve bratwurst. Indeed, goatwurst is a regular staple of the Do Drop Inn’s weekly Thursday night, island-wide “Jump Up.”
4. Following the Allies’ D-Day invasion, June 6, 1944, elements of the German Army launched a counter-offensive in Belgium, December 16, 1944, which came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge. A last-ditch effort by the German high command, it failed miserably and allowed the Allies to gain an unencumbered route to Berlin.
5. In 1936 George V died and was succeeded by his son, Edward VIII, as monarch of the British empire. Shortly after taking the throne, Edward VIII abdicated to marry the American-born divorcee Wallis Simpson, and was succeeded by his brother, George VI. Edward became the Duke of Windsor and his bride the Duchess. They moved to Paris where they engaged in a high society lifestyle. They later moved to Portugal. The British government ultimately moved the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, who were suspected of Nazi sympathies, to the Bahamas, where the Duke acted as Governor General until the conclusion of World War II. They moved back to Paris, where they spent the rest of their lives.
6. Behind his back, the Nazi general staff referred to Adolf Hitler (1889 – 1945) as the “Little Corporal,” a derisive acknowledgement of the highest rank Hitler attained in the Austrian army. Hitler’s propensity for micro-managing the German military led to an appalling series of strategic blunders which influenced the outcome of World War II in the Allies’ favor. They included failing to attack the remaining elements of the British expeditionary force at Dunkirk; not invading Great Britain after conquering France; attacking the Soviet Union and thus opening a second front; and failing to recognize the Normandy invasion as the main Allied thrust instead of a feint to distract attention from what Hitler was convinced would be the main attack further north along the French coast.
7. J3’s prodigious memory has failed him in this rare instance. He repeatedly refers to the German submarine as the U-505. This cannot be the case. The U-505 was captured by the U.S. Navy off the coast of West Africa on June 4, 1944. Since 1954, the U-505 has been on permanent display at the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago, Illinois. A five-man American boarding party stopped the U-505 from sinking after it was scuttled by its crew. The two surviving members of that detail, Zenon Lukosius and Wayne Pickels, return to visit the U-505 in Chicago every year on the anniversary of its capture, along with former German U-boater Pete Peterson, who now lives in Toledo, Ohio. The U-505 is one of only four Nazi submarines extant, with the others located in Kiel and Hamburg, Germany, and in Liverpool, England.
8. Hitler constantly insisted the Third Reich, as he called his dictatorship, would last for a thousand years. Thus, in the parlance of the time, it became known as the Thousand Year Reich.
9. In 1934, Fulgencio Batista, an army sergeant, led a revolt that overthrew the regime of President Gerardo Machado in Cuba. Batista created a corrupt police state in which he and his cronies enriched themselves at the expense of the public treasury and the Cuban people. Those who dissented were tortured and murdered, and their bodies dumped in gutters as a reminder to the Cuban people of the price of resistance. On Christmas Day 1956, Fidel Castro Ruiz, then in his twenties, landed in Cuba with a band of twelve revolutionaries, and set up a headquarters in the Sierra Maestra range. By 1958 his force had grown to 2,000, comprised mostly of young, middle-class Cubans. Castro received financial support from landowners and businessmen who secretly opposed the Batista regime. Castro’s efforts were helped substantially when the U.S. government cut off arms shipments to Batista. As 1958 neared its end, so did the Batista regime, as Castro’s band of rebels captured Santa Clara, the capital of Las Villas Province just 150 miles from Havana. Batista dispatched a regiment of reinforcements who, upon their arrival, refused to get out of the railroad cars in which they’d traveled. On New Year’s Day 1959, Batista fled into exile to the Dominican Republic, and Castro took over. Throughout Castro’s seven-day march to the capital, Cubans of all economic and political stations cheered what they believed were the forces of liberation and democracy.

Chapter Three: Alfonso

1. The leaders of the Mexican Revolution installed Venustiano Carranza in the presidency in 1915. He was elected in 1917 to serve a four-year term as the candidate of the Constitutional Party. A patriarch and a quiet man who wore round glasses and sported a long white beard, Carranza was exactly what Mexico did *not* need given the confusion of the times. What was needed was a politician, someone who could deal with the violent factions that had coalesced into the Revolution. In early 1920 a dispute over water rights in the state of Sonora exploded into violence. Carranza sent troops to stabilize the situation, but Alvaro Obregon – with the support of the local army commander and the state government – rebelled and marched south to Mexico City. Carranza, anticipating defeat, filled several freight trains with the remainder of the Mexican treasury, and departed for Veracruz. Unfortunately for Carranza, the lead train in his convoy derailed, and he was forced to try to make his way on foot to Veracruz, accompanied by a handful of soldiers. On May 21, 1920, he and his entourage spent the night in the village of Tlaxcalantongo. The next morning, members of his party found his body, riddled by a fusillade of bullets too numerous to count. The government announced his death as a suicide. In November of 1920, Alvaro Obregon was overwhelmingly elected president of Mexico.
2. Chapultepec Castle was originally the summer home of the Spanish viceroys, and was located on the then-western outskirts of Mexico City. Under the Emperor Maximilian, a broad avenue was built connecting the castle with the city center, and Maximilian refurbished it and made it his official residence until his execution by firing squad, June 19, 1867, in the provincial city of Queretaro by the forces of Benito Juarez. At the time of Alfonso Sanchez's departure from Mexico, Chapultepec Castle served as the official residence of Mexico's president.
3. Once again, J3 is spreading a little mischief about guacamole for his own amusement. In his several references to guacamole dip, he always credits Alfonso with its invention. Indeed, Alfonso's Beach Shack claims in its motto to be the original home of guacamole dip. This assertion is without foundation in fact. What is today called guacamole was first mentioned by the ancient Mayans, and it has been a staple of Mexican cuisine for literally centuries, a fact of which J3 is almost certainly aware. However, whenever I questioned him, he was steadfast in his assertion that Alfonso Sanchez invented guacamole.
4. "Splice the main brace" is British Navy slang for taking a drink of rum.
5. International Telephone and Telegraph ran the Cuban telephone company until 1960 under a monopoly grant, at which time the Castro government expropriated it in an act which continues to be an unresolved sore point between the United States and Cuba.
6. One of the most popular inspirational poems ever written, "If," by Rudyard Kipling, is presented here in its entirety:

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;
If you can dream---and not make dreams your master;
If you can think---and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,
And never breathe a word about your loss:
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings---nor lose the common touch,*

*If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much:
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And---which is more---you'll be a Man, my son!*

Chapter Four: Caribe's

1. James Bowie (1796 – 1836) is remembered for his famous "Bowie knife" and as a sometimes reckless adventurer. Along with Davy Crockett and James Travis, Bowie is among the most famous and legendary figures to have died March 6, 1836, at the Battle of the Alamo. The mythology surrounding their lives and deaths is at substantial variance with reality. Jim Bowie was hardly a fighter for freedom. He found himself in Texas while on the run from U.S. authorities who were pursuing charges against Bowie for land fraud, stemming from his filing of fraudulent and forged land claims in Louisiana. Simply put, Bowie was a con artist who sold phony land titles to unsuspecting settlers. He also had been involved with his brother in the illegal smuggling of slaves into Louisiana. Although Bowie died at the Alamo, it was hardly under heroic circumstances. Confined to bed and nearly comatose with pneumonia, Bowie never fired a shot during the battle.
2. Sir William Blackstone (1723 – 1780) was an English jurist who turned to scholarship and teaching after failing to achieve success in legal practice. Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (4 vol., 1765 – 69) is required reading for any serious student of the law. It has exerted tremendous influence on the legal profession and on the teaching of law in England and in the United States for more than two centuries. The most important aspect of his work was his interpretation of a 1689 list of rights passed by Parliament known as "An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown." Blackstone delineated this list of powers and restraints to which subjects were entitled as "The Bill of Rights." In 1774, South Carolina delegate Edward Rutledge – who had read Blackstone – rose at America's Continental Congress to say, "I come with an idea of getting a Bill of Rights." It would take a revolution and 14 years, but Alexander Hamilton wrote in Federalist Paper Number 84, "The most considerable remaining objection (to the new U.S. Constitution) is that the plan contains no Bill of Rights." James Madison agreed, and Thomas Jefferson wrote that he favored "an annexation of a Bill of Rights to the Constitution." And so the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution became known – though never formally titled – as The Bill of Rights.
3. Cuba is, without a doubt, one of the CIA's greatest failures. Despite years of covert operations against the island, including sabotage, assassination attempts and psychological warfare, the agency failed to unseat the Communist government of Fidel Castro. The history of this secret war is preserved in a Havana museum run by Cuba's state security service, the Ministry of the Interior (MININT). Since the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959, MININT has worked to uncover, infiltrate and dismantle CIA networks on the island. More often than not MININT has succeeded, and today the relics of dozens of busted CIA operations are on display.
4. J3's 1935 timeline of events in Nazi Germany is correct, but incomplete. On March 16, Hitler did reintroduce compulsory military service. Also in March, the populace of the Saar Territory, a small region bordering France and Luxembourg, voted for reunification with Germany, restoring German control to territory that France had administered under the Treaty of Versailles. The treaty called for a 1935 plebiscite, in which more than 90 percent of the votes cast favored its reunion with Germany. Soon after the votes were counted in the Saar Territory, Germany repudiated the Versailles Treaty. J3 failed to recall a particularly ominous event of 1935 – on September 15, the Nazi government took away German citizenship from all German Jews.
5. J3 is correct on this point. Mussolini's army, under General Badoglio, invaded Ethiopia on October 3, 1935. Despite outcries and legislation by the U.S. government, and token opposition by the British armed forces, Italy continued its campaign against Ethiopia, culminating in its annexation of the entire nation on May 9, 1936, and avenging its defeat 40 years earlier at the Battle of Adua.
6. Louisiana Gov. Huey "Kingfish" Long was killed, according to official reports, by Carl Austin Weiss on Sunday, September 8, 1935. Gov. Long spent that afternoon talking with state leaders during a special legislative session. After the session was finished, Gov. Long briefly returned to his office, then started back to the House chambers. From this point, a stranger (Weiss) approached him from the front, concealing a gun in his right hand beneath a Panama hat. John Fournet thought the stranger appeared threatening and lunged at him, as did the governor's closest bodyguard, Murphy Roden. Weiss fired one shot at Gov. Long point-blank, but Fournet deflected his aim from Long's heart to his abdomen. Roden grabbed the gun and wrestled the man to the floor, shooting him as he did. The governor started to run, but he was still present when the other bodyguards opened fire, emptying their guns at the assassin, who lay dead on the floor. Theories have surfaced as alternatives to the official report. Probably the most widely believed theory is that one of Huey Long's bodyguards bullets inadvertently struck Long while they were shooting Weiss. This theory makes the statement that Weiss merely punched Gov. Long (or argued with him), and his bodyguards opened fire and accidentally shot the governor. Another possibility suggests a plot started by some of Gov. Long's enemies. It is possible that one of his bodyguards shot Long because he was planted by anti-Long forces. Attempts to verify such a theory have been unsuccessful.
7. "We have undertaken a new order of things; yet we progress to it under the framework and in the spirit and intent of the American Constitution. We have proceeded throughout the Nation a measurable distance on the road toward this new order," President Franklin D. Roosevelt noted at the beginning of his 1935 State of the Union Address. He went on to outline his proposals for what came to be known as Phase Two of the New Deal, the cornerstone of which was Social Security, signed into law by FDR on August 14, 1935.

8. William J. Donovan (1883 – 1959) was born on New Year's Day 1883 in Buffalo, NY. The grandson of Irish emigrants, he worked his way through Columbia College (now Columbia University), where he also found time for athletics, earning the nickname "Wild Bill" as the star quarterback of the Columbia varsity football team. Donovan graduated with both his Bachelor's and Law degrees in 1905, the same graduating class as Franklin D. Roosevelt and, as J3 notes, Charles Bowie Grutwilder. Donovan is among a small number of military officers who rose from the enlisted ranks to obtain general's stars. His military career started in May of 1912 when he and some other young men from Buffalo received permission to form National Guard Cavalry Unit, Troop I, 1st New York Cavalry. Enlisting in the unit as a trooper, he soon made sergeant and was elected captain of the troop in October of that year. Troop I was one of several New York National Guard units called up for federal service in 1916 for the Mexican Border crisis triggered by Poncho Villas' raids on Texas and New Mexico. Though Troop I did not see direct combat, Army brass noticed the high degree of skill and readiness displayed by this unit and took note of its commander.

When war came in 1917, Donovan was offered a desk job at the rank of colonel. He would have none of that. Donovan wanted a field command. In the end, Donovan, with a rank of major was given command of the 1st Battalion. "Wild Bill" led the 1st Battalion from its training at Camp Mills, Long Island, through all of its campaigns in France, up to and including the St. Mihiel Offensive. By that time he had attained the rank of Lt. Colonel and had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in the Battle of the Ourcq. Just before the Argonne Offensive, Donovan had been earmarked for promotion and a position on the staff of the Provost Marshal General. Through the intercession of Douglas MacArthur, then Chief of Staff of the 42 Division, he was allowed to stay with the regiment for one more offensive. It would turn out to be the regiment's toughest and the last of the war. Col. Harry Mitchel assigned Donovan to direct combat operations at the front while he coordinated the attack at HQ. Only 600 of the regiment's original officers and men were still on the line. In many companies, green officers were leading raw replacements. So that he could be recognized and to give the new men some visible sign of authority, Donovan put on every insignia of rank he could muster, becoming a walking target for every German sniper at the front. On October 14, 1918, the 69th had been fighting and taking casualties all day. As night fell, the regiment stayed in the field and waited to renew the offensive at day break. In the morning, as he was moving up to examine a position, Donovan was hit in the leg by a rifle bullet. His leg shattered, he crawled into a shell hole and refused to be evacuated. For over five hours he directed the battle from that shell hole. Upon being informed that the Germans were preparing a counter attack, Donovan ordered a mortar barrage, which stopped the counter offensive cold. Not until he knew that another unit was moving up to relieve his regiment did Donovan allow himself to be carried to the rear. For his actions on the October 14 and 15, 1918, he was awarded the Metal of Honor.

Between WWI and WWII, Donovan had a distinguished career as a lawyer and public servant. In 1922, as U.S. District Attorney for Western New York he was charged with enforcing the Prohibition laws of the nation. He carried out his duties with courage, disregarding threats on his life from gangsters. His sense of honor even forced him to order a raid on his own social club, an act that did not endear him to Buffalo society. He served in the Coolidge Administration as Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Anti-Trust Division. In this capacity he argued and won six cases before the Supreme Court of the United States. He ran twice for elected office in New York State, in 1924 for Lt. Governor and in 1928 for Governor. A Republican in a time of Democratic ascendancy he was defeated both times. Years later, at the Columbia University class reunion to which J3 refers, President Roosevelt said, "If Donovan had been a Democrat, he would have been the first Catholic President of the United States."

After Roosevelt was elected to the Presidency, he gave Donovan assignments that would foreshadow Donovan's World War II position as head of the OSS. Traveling as a private citizen, he managed (as J3 accurately reports) to get an interview with Benito Mussolini when no one else could. He toured the Italian positions in Ethiopia and reported to FDR on Italy's military capability. On December 7, 1941, a Sunday afternoon football game between the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers was interrupted by the announcement over the public address system: "Colonel William Donovan, come to the box office at once. There is an important phone message." The message was from Washington, informing him of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. By that date, Donovan was FDR's Coordinator of Intelligence (COI).

With the United States entry into World War II, he began assembling the organization that would be the forerunner of the CIA, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which he operated out of Zurich, Switzerland, during most of the war. Interestingly, one of Donovan's key OSS operatives during World War II was none other than William J. Casey, who later became the controversial director of central intelligence (DCI) under President Ronald Reagan, and who was embroiled in the infamous arms-for-hostages "Iran-gate" scandal. The story of the OSS and its agents in WWII is too large to be told here. But through the OSS and the people and philosophy which came out of it (and which continued in the Central Intelligence Agency), William Donovan left an imprint on America and the world which would affect history for the rest of the 20th Century. He ended the war with the rank of Major General.

William J. Donovan's last service to his country was to be appointed as Ambassador to Thailand in 1953-54. It was a crucial time in the history of southeast Asia. The U.S. was forming SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, a counterpart of NATO) and beginning its involvement in Vietnam. For this service he received the National Security Medal from President Eisenhower. Thus he became the first American to win the top four military and civilian honors his country could bestow, the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal and the National Security Medal. All in all, a remarkable man.

9. From the time of his revolt in 1934, Fulgencio Batista gave free reign to organized crime elements from the United States. In return for payoffs to himself and his entourage, Batista allowed the various U.S. crime families to operate casinos and

engage in all manner of illegal activities outside the reach of U.S. law enforcement agencies. By the end of the 1950s, the infamous Meyer Lansky – who was known in law enforcement circles as the financier of organized crime – virtually controlled the Batista government. An interesting, albeit fictionalized, account of the final days of Batista and the influence of organized crime in Cuba can be found in Francis Ford Coppola's film, "The Godfather, Part II," in which the character Hyman Roth provides a fictional portrait of Lansky.

10. Homer S. Cummings was the first of FDR's four attorneys general, serving in the post from 1933 until 1939. At that time, the Cabinet consisted of only ten positions. Remarkably, two of FDR's Cabinet officers, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, served throughout the entire Roosevelt presidency, from 1933 through his death in 1945.

11. In the half century after the British victory over France at Waterloo, many changes took place in the political boundaries and population distribution of Europe. The French and Napoleonic revolutions created new conditions that challenged the leaders of Europe gathered at the Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815. Delegates had to construct a peace settlement that digested the political and social transformations that had taken place in the previous quarter century and anticipate the new demands created by those changes. They redrew the state borders and redefined the spheres of influence. The geopolitical structure they created and the surface order that resulted endured until 1848.

Work went slowly during the ten-month span of the Congress of Vienna. The leaders – Lord Castlereagh of Great Britain, Count von Hardenberg of Prussia, Prince Klemens von Metternich of Austria, Tsar Alexander I of Russia and Prince Charles Maurice de Talleyrand of France – met in small secret conferences to decide the future of Europe and its territories. The Congress dealt with numerous issues: the status of France, the new political boundaries, the response to liberal and national attitudes sweeping the continent, the fate of those powers who had lost territory during the previous twenty-five years, and the future of dispossessed dynasties. The solutions proposed were moderate ones. France was allowed to return to its 1792 boundaries; however, after Napoleon's return and the One Hundred Days, the allies cut back the boundaries and imposed penalties. They virtually ignored the democratic, liberal and nationalistic forces in favor of a more traditional solution to the upheavals of the past twenty-five years.

Events had drastically altered the map of Europe. For example, the Holy Roman Empire had disappeared. In an attempt to restore some balance, the Congress followed four principles: legitimacy, encirclement of France, compensation and balance of power. The Congress ruled that royal houses that had been expelled, such as the Bourbons in France, Spain and Naples, the House of Savoy in Sardinia-Piedmont, and the House of Orange in Holland, would be restored to their thrones. The redrawing of boundaries created a protective belt of states around France to make future aggression more difficult. The principle of compensation assured that no important power suffered a loss as the result of the Congress' work. Austria was compensated for the loss of the Austrian Netherlands by gaining territory in Italy and along the Adriatic. Sweden received Norway in return for permitting Russia to keep Finland.

Although the Congress has received criticism for ignoring the growth of liberty, equality and fraternity in Europe, it has received praise for finding a general settlement of a complex series of problems, especially from scholars who favorably compare its work to that of the victorious allies at Versailles after World War I. The representatives were not totally, blindly reactionary: many of the changes of the previous 25 years were retained. The 40 years of general peace that followed are testimony to the success of the Congress. But, by ignoring the forces of change, the representatives at Vienna ensured the ultimate failure of the system they created.

12. Lindley M. Garrison served as U.S. secretary of war under President Woodrow Wilson from 1913 until 1916. Wilson was elected twice (1912 and 1916) and served both terms, punctuated by World War I and Wilson's advocacy of U.S. participation in the League of Nations. In his first election, Wilson triumphed over both incumbent William H. Taft and former President Theodore Roosevelt, who finished second under the "Bull Moose" Progressive banner.
13. On December 2, 1823, in his annual message to Congress, President James Monroe declared North and South America to be off-limits for any further European colonial expansion. "The American continents," he said, "by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers." Those powers could keep the American colonies they still had, Monroe said, but any attempt to expand them, establish new ones, or retake old ones, anywhere in the hemisphere, would be considered an act of hostility toward the United States. The President called his principle the American System; in the 1850s it became better known as the Monroe Doctrine.
14. William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925) was known as the "Great Commoner." A persistent agitator, he opposed the special privileges of favored groups. Although he was thwarted three times in bids for the presidency, everything reasonable in his political program has since become law. Bryan was born in Salem, Ill., on March 19, 1860. In 1887 he moved to Nebraska, and in 1890 he was the second Democrat elected to Congress from that heavily Republican state. He was reelected in 1892 but declined to run in 1894. While seeking nomination as U. S. senator (1893 and 1895), he stumped widely for free coinage of silver, tariff reform and an income tax.

At the Chicago Democratic National Convention of 1896, Bryan boosted his chances for the presidential nomination with his famous "Cross of Gold" speech – in which he argued the case for free silver. ("You shall not press down upon the

brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”) Although he became the candidate of four parties (Democratic, Populist, Silver Republican, and National Silver), Bryan was defeated by William McKinley.

Bryan was largely responsible for the nomination of Woodrow Wilson in 1912, which won him appointment as secretary of state in return. A nationalist, Bryan expanded United States control over the Caribbean in order to protect the Panama Canal and to defend Latin America against European encroachment. (The Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1914 granted the United States an option to build a canal in Nicaragua.) As a peace advocate, Bryan obtained the agreement of 30 nations to treaties calling for the investigation of disputes before resorting to war. Bryan resigned in 1915 when he feared that the U.S. demand for "strict accountability" by Germany for its submarine warfare after the sinking of the Lusitania might lead to war with Germany. Thereafter his political power declined rapidly.

Bryan blamed the war in part on the godlessness he associated with the theory of evolution. In his last five years he published more on religious topics than in a lifetime of writing on politics. He stumped the country demanding anti-evolution laws, and he was rewarded by the passage of such a statute in Tennessee. In defense of literal interpretation of the Scriptures, he won the plaudits of evangelicals, but his name was anathema to scientists and supporters of academic freedom. Bryan's death in Dayton, Tenn., on July 26, 1925, came five days after the conclusion of the famous Scopes trial, at which he had been humiliated and discredited during cross-examination by the famous Chicago trial lawyer Clarence Darrow.

15. After Spain ceded the Philippines to the U.S. in 1899 under the Treaty of Paris following the Spanish-American War, Filipino stewards became a mainstay in the U.S. Navy, serving both at the officers' mess in the Pentagon and at the White House mess, which the Navy administers. This tradition continues to the present, even though the U.S. granted complete independence to the Philippines in 1946.

Chapter Five: Guatemala

1. "I Like Ike" was the campaign slogan during Eisenhower's successful 1952 campaign for the presidency.
2. Both Allen Dulles and John Foster Dulles were the coldest of cold warriors. As J3 correctly notes, both served in the Eisenhower administration, and neither acquitted himself particularly well. Although both were attorneys, neither showed any respect for international laws or treaties. With Allen running the C.I.A. and John Foster in charge of the State Department, covert operations and the propping up of oppressive regimes in the name of anti-communism became the order of the day. Foster Dulles believed that neutrality by any nation-state was immoral, and under his stewardship the U.S. tried to destroy any attempts at creating non-aligned governments. During its time in power, the Eisenhower administration set in motion a series of actions that ultimately resulted in U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Into a country – Laos – with a *per capita* income of about \$75, the Eisenhower administration poured more than \$300 million, roughly twice the nation's total income. Almost all the money was stolen by Laotian politicians and generals. The C.I.A. assisted in ousting the neutral government of Laos under Prince Souvanna Phouma. It was not the C.I.A.'s only involvement in the internal affairs of other nations under the Dulles brothers. In addition to organizing the overthrow of Guatemala to which J3 refers, the agency also was involved in the overthrow of the governments of Iran (1953) and Egypt (1954), as well as the attempted overthrow of the Indonesian government in 1958. The "Company," as it is known, engaged in sabotage throughout the Far East, including against the governments of China, Laos and Burma, and engaged in a long list of assassination attempts against heads of state including Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Chou En-Lai of China, and Baprice Lummuba of The Congo. As early as 1956, President Eisenhower received a highly classified report sharply critical of the C.I.A.'s penchant for "king-making." The report suggested the C.I.A. was out of control and in desperate need of formal oversight. It concluded by asking, "Where will we be tomorrow?"
3. John Moors Cabot was a career foreign service officer who served as assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs from March 3, 1953, through March 1, 1954.
4. Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., officially served as United Nations ambassador from January 26, 1953, until September 3, 1960. He ran with Richard Nixon as the GOP's vice-presidential candidate in 1960, and distinguished himself during the campaign by insisting that he be allowed to take a one-hour nap every day after lunch. Nixon once derisively referred to Cabot Lodge as "the laziest man in American politics." He served subsequently as U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam from August 26, 1963, until June 28, 1964.
5. In December 1996 the peace accords between the Guatemalan government and the rebels were finally signed, ending 36 years of what had been daily violence and brutality. During that time, more than 200,000 people, mostly indigenous Indian peasants, died or "disappeared." Since the signing of the accords, dozens of mass graves have been uncovered, and international human rights groups have investigated thousands of allegations of torture and murder, grim reminders of the Guatemalan military's well deserved reputation as lawless thugs and killers.
6. Jacobo Arbenz was elected president of Guatemala in 1950, following the unsolved assassination of his major rival. Arbenz was known for his wild and troubling mood swings, which many attributed to his father, an expatriate Swiss pharmacist who was a drug addict and who married Arbenz's mother, a mixed-race Guatemalan. Arbenz was regarded by his contemporaries as a brilliant military strategist and theorist, and a strident nationalist. J3 is correct in his observation of Arbenz as a man caught in a vise between the interests of United Fruit and the United States. A secret 1952 National Intelligence Estimate released under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act presents the expropriation of United Fruit's interests as a test of American resolve. "If the company should submit to Guatemalan demands, the political position of the Arbenz administration would be greatly strengthened. The result, even if it were a compromised agreement, would be presented as a national triumph over 'colonialism' and it would arouse popular enthusiasm."
7. The small municipality of Ocotal in Nicaragua near the Honduras border ultimately became the site of several major battles during the Sandanista-Contra conflict. It would appear that Don Padrone could not have picked a worse place if he indeed anticipated a quiet, peaceful retirement as J3 stated.
8. Arbenz was indeed influenced by his Salvadoran wife, Maria, who was an avowed Marxist. Under her prodding, he surrounded himself with Marxist advisors, legalized the Guatemalan Communist Party, and peppered his speeches and remarks with the Marxist rhetoric of the day. During the Korean War, his pro-government press openly supported North Korea, and in an action which could only inflame the United States he proclaimed a national day of mourning following the death of the Russian dictator Joseph Stalin.
9. Dwight David Eisenhower was inaugurated on January 20, 1953, after defeating Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois by an overwhelming 33.9 million popular votes to Stevenson's 27.3 million. The Electoral College tally was even more one-sided: Eisenhower 442, Stevenson 89.

10. Supreme Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was just one of the many prominent positions that Dwight Eisenhower (1890 – 1969) held during his lifetime. Born in Dennison, Texas, he was raised in Abilene, Kansas. He did not receive an appointment to West Point until 1910, and after graduating from the military academy in 1915 did not see active duty during World War I. It wasn't until 1935, when Eisenhower was stationed in the Philippines as a staff officer to Gen. Douglas MacArthur, that his career began to flourish. After leaving MacArthur's command in 1939, he was assigned by then-Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall to the War Department's general staff. In 1942, Marshall placed Ike in command of the invasion of North Africa. Because of his winning personality and tremendous diplomatic and political skills, Eisenhower rose to the position of Supreme Allied Commander in 1944, prior to the invasion of France. After the war, Eisenhower served as Army Chief of Staff from November 1945 until February 1948, when he accepted the presidency of Columbia University. However, in December 1950 President Harry Truman recalled Eisenhower to active duty as Supreme Commander of NATO, then headquartered in Paris. Eisenhower relinquished the post in May 1952 to begin his campaign for the U.S. Presidency.
11. In addition to serving as Illinois' governor and losing two U.S. Presidential elections in 1952 and 1956, Adlai E. Stevenson (1900 – 1965) played a key role as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations during the so-called Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. As U.N. ambassador, Stevenson served on President Kennedy's Executive Committee of the U.S. National Security Council, known as EX-COMM, a hand-picked group of 19 men that advised the President throughout the missile crisis. Stevenson played a key role in one of the most memorable moments of the crisis. On October 25, at the United Nations he asked Soviet Ambassador Zorin about the missiles in Cuba: "Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the U.S.S.R. has placed and is placing medium- and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? ... Don't wait for the translation! Yes or no?" Zorin responded, "I am not in an American courtroom, sir, and I do not wish to answer a question put to me in the manner in which a prosecutor does-" Then Stevenson interrupted and said, "You are in the courtroom of world opinion right now, and you can answer yes or no. You have denied that they exist, and I want to know whether I have understood you correctly.... I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over, if that's your decision. And I am also prepared to present the evidence in this room." Zorin did not answer, so Stevenson proceeded to show the reconnaissance photographs to a stunned audience. In conclusion, it can be said with certainty that Stevenson had a large impact on EX-COMM. The solution to the crisis was one that he predicted and worked for. Kennedy was often critical of Stevenson's views, but in the end he adopted his ambassador's ideas: avoiding a military confrontation and finding a solution through negotiation, compromise and inducement.
12. Career foreign service officer John E. Peurifoy of South Carolina served as U.S. ambassador to Guatemala from October 5, 1953, to October 2, 1954. He was succeeded by Norman Armour, who held the ambassador-ship briefly from October 18, 1954, until May 9, 1955.

Chapter Six: The First Mrs. J

1. Dwight Eisenhower was credited with the quote, "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like," after he had taken up painting as a means of relaxation, at the urging of former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill.
2. The quotation, "Every man a king, no man wears a crown," was the populist rallying cry that Huey P. Long invoked to explain his political philosophy. It was a mainstay, not only in his election speeches, but in other stump speeches he gave throughout his career.
3. David Atlee Phillips, *The Night Watch*, Atheneum, New York, 1977.
4. Ted Turner, founder and president of Turner Broadcasting, once made a speech to a group of television cable executives in which he said, "I was cable before cable was cool," paraphrasing the country music hit, "I Was Country Before Country Was Cool."
5. At the time of Mrs. Jefferson's departure in December 1963, British Airways was known as BOAC (British Overseas Airways Company).

Chapter Seven: Che

1. The Special Operations Department of the U.S. Army essentially provides military support for the clandestine activities ordered by the national security apparatus.
2. George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, published in 1945, is a political satire of a totalitarian society ruled by a mighty dictatorship, in all probability an allegory for the events surrounding the Russian Revolution of 1917. The animals of "Manor Farm" overthrow their human master after a long history of mistreatment. Led by the pigs, the farm animals continue to do their work, only with more pride, knowing that they are working for themselves, as opposed to working for humans. Little by little, the pigs become dominant, gaining more power and advantage over the other animals, so much so that they become as corrupt and power-hungry as their predecessors, the humans. The theme in *Animal Farm* maintains that in every society there are leaders who, if given the opportunity, will likely abuse their power.
3. Che Guevara was, to put it mildly, hygienically challenged. He was famous for going two or three weeks at a time without taking a bath or changing his clothes. This fact was well known not only in Castro's circle in Havana, but also to the Central Intelligence Agency and is mentioned with some amusement in an official C.I.A. profile of Che that was released under the Freedom of Information Act.
4. Che attended university on and off for a period of time, but despite his claim (also asserted by others on his behalf) to be a medical doctor, he never earned a medical degree nor served the internship and residency necessary for him to practice medicine.
5. Gustavo Villoldo was the Bolivian military officer charged with finding and ultimately arranging the execution of Che. Villoldo was a very clever and resourceful man, completing his mission with assistance from the C.I.A. As of this writing, Villoldo is retired and living in Florida.
6. Legend has it that upon his capture Che Guevara shouted, "I know why you've come for me. Shoot, coward. You're only going to kill a man." After exhaustive research, it appears that J3 is correct in asserting the fictional status of this quotation. No information, official or otherwise, exists to confirm Che's statement. J3 also is correct in describing Che as a lifelong asthma sufferer who carried an inhaler with him at all times, which the C.I.A. profile on Che confirms. (See Note 3 above.)
7. Che Guevara never posed a serious military threat to the Bolivian government, contrary to legend. His attempts to lead a revolt ultimately backfired when the peasants he was attempting to organize instead helped Villoldo and his troops pinpoint the exact location of Che's camp. Indeed it appears based on subsequent reports that the Bolivian peasants were even more eager than the Bolivian government to get rid of Che and his band of so-called revolutionaries. It is also widely accepted within the international intelligence community that Fidel Castro used a "back channel" to provide the C.I.A. with information on Che's whereabouts.

Chapter Eight: The Last Mrs. J

1. After the Spanish-American war, Spain ceded the island of Puerto Rico to the United States in 1898. The inhabitants became US citizens in 1917, with their own Senate and House of Delegates, and in 1948, for the first time, they elected their own Governor, who is authorized to appoint his Cabinet and members of the island's Supreme Court. In 1952 Puerto Rico became a Commonwealth voluntarily associated with the United States. The island's status is a matter of constant debate for both political and economic reasons as Puerto Rico is heavily dependent on US funding.
2. Because of their large casinos, elaborate dining facilities and headliner entertainment, both the Americana and El San Juan were considered flamboyant hotels in the 1960s. However, J3 is incorrect in asserting they were located next to each other on Isle Verde Beach.

Chapter Nine: Passages

1. Lyndon B. Johnson (1908 – 1973) became the 36th President of the United States upon the assassination of John F. Kennedy, November 22, 1963. He served the remainder of Kennedy's elected term, then was elected for a full term, serving as President until January 1969. In 1948, Johnson was elected to the U.S. Senate after winning the Texas Democratic primary by a scant 87 votes, amid rumors of vote fraud, and earning him the nickname "Landslide Lyndon." He became Senate Majority Leader in 1953 at the remarkably young age of 45 and earned a reputation for legislative legerdemain and deal-making that positioned him for a run at the presidency in 1960, resulting in his selection as Kennedy's running mate. It is clear that J3 felt a measure of respect and affection for the vain, mercurial Johnson. Yet he never lost sight of LBJ's failings and peccadillos.
2. Luis Echeverria Alvarez served as president of Mexico from 1970 to 1976. Poor economic conditions prevailed through much of his term, and he is remembered today for his 1976 decision to devalue the peso, the first monetary devaluation in Mexico since 1954.
3. Salvadore Allende became president of Chile in 1970, the first Marxist freely elected to lead a South American country. As a covert component of U.S. policy under President Richard Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, America directed the destabilization of Chile during 1971 and 1972, resulting in the September 11, 1973, coup in which Allende lost not only the presidency, but his life.
4. An Aero Mexico DC9-15 jetliner in fact crashed upon approach to Puerto Vallarta airport, June 20, 1973, killing 27. The flight had left Houston with 22 passengers and a crew of five. Cause of the crash was determined to be pilot error.

Chapter Ten: Haiti

1. The official name of the Tonton Macoutes was the patriotic-sounding Volunteers of National Security. To all Haitians, they were the dreaded Tonton Macoutes, a name drawn from Haitian folklore, signifying boogeymen who prowl the night in search of bad little children, stealing them away in the straw satchels (*macoutes*) peasants carry. Duvaliers' Ton Ton Macoutes carried guns instead of straw satchels, but like the fabled bogeymen their victims were seldom seen again. The Macoutes under Duvalier had the right to arrest or kill any citizen with impunity. They rightly earned the reputation as one of the world's largest, best organized and most lawless goon squads, with unlimited license to torture, steal and destroy.
2. Edmund Burke (1729 – 1797) was an influential British historian and social philosopher whose works included *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in which he was bitterly critical of the excesses of the French Revolution. Although remembered as a conservative, Burke was a staunch defender of the American Revolution, which he supported in his writings and speeches.
3. Christopher Columbus discovered the Island of Hispanola in 1492. Haiti, formerly called St. Dominique, shares the western third of that island with the Spanish-speaking country of the Dominican Republic. Initially, French buccaneers occupied that part of the island now known as Haiti; however, they were followed by permanent French settlers. By the end of the 1600s, after France defeated Spain in Europe, the Treaty of Ryswick gave France that part of Hispanola known as St. Dominique. With its fertile soil and thousands of sugar, coffee, cotton and indigo plantations, St. Dominique furnished France with two-thirds of its overseas trade, and employed more than 15,000 French sailors. The colony alone provided half of Europe's supply of tropical produce. For the French planters it was a tropical paradise of spectacular mountain ranges surrounded by the clear blue sea, its salt-tinged breezes offsetting the tropical sun's steady beat.

4. St. Dominique was known as the home of the most brutal and sadistic bondage known to mankind. The French planters preferred to work their slaves to death and buy new ones, rather than allow the slaves to survive and reproduce. This brutal logic was based entirely on financial calculations. Statistics proved it was not economically sound to coddle slaves and keep them alive for more than four to seven years, a period sufficient to allow planters to amortize their initial investments in the slave force, while providing a respectable eight to twelve percent annual return. As a consequence, the French planters in St. Dominique (Haiti) killed nearly one million Africans throughout a 100-year period of time. It should be noted that the plantation owners depreciated horses over a 15-year period; thus, to a plantation owner a horse was worth approximately four times as much as a human being.
5. Toussaint L'Ouverture was a brilliant revolutionary and leader of men. His achievements are too great to cover here in detail; however, the historian Henry Adams wrote, "The life of Toussaint L'Ouverture has not been recorded as often as that of Napoleon; nevertheless, no man exerted such influence upon the history of the United States than did Toussaint L'Ouverture. His influence upon our destiny has been more profound than that of any European head of state." The historian Eugene Genovese wrote of him, "Toussaint's revolution did not seek to turn the blacks of St. Dominique into Europeans, but to lead them toward a recognition that European technology had revolutionized the world and forced all people to participate in the creation of a world culture at once nationally varied and increasingly uniform. From that moment, the slaves in the New World had before them the possibility of a struggle for freedom that pointed toward participation in the mainstream of world history, rather than away from it."
6. Czar Nicholas II (1868 – 1918) was the last emperor of Russia, perhaps best remembered for being executed along with his immediate family by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution. Though he was no more oppressive in his treatment of the Russian serfs (in fact, probably less so) than most of his predecessors, J3 likely invokes Nicholas' name as a generic reference to the pattern of brutality that existed throughout most of Russia's feudal history.
7. Francois Duvalier first came to prominence as a medical doctor who, with U.S. assistance, specialized in the treatment of yaws, the leprocy-like disease that had plagued Haiti for centuries. He was known as a compassionate doctor and a political liberal who championed, then wrote, a new constitution for Haiti, ensuring equality and equity for all its citizens. His popular election in 1957 as president was greeted with great joy by the Haitian people, who believed they would finally find justice and prosperity under his leadership. Almost one million Haitians went to the polls, sweeping Duvalier into office with 68 percent of the vote. On October 22, 1957, Duvalier took the oath of office and began one of history's most brutal regimes.
8. It would be almost impossible to overstate the cruelty, brutality and wanton disregard for human life that characterized the Duvaliers' rule of Haiti. J3's characterization of "Papa Doc" Duvalier as a monster is entirely accurate. Graham Greene's compelling 1966 novel, *The Comedians*, revealed the brutality of Papa Doc, whose public denunciation of the book pleased Greene mightily. Of the book, Greene said, "I am glad to say (it) touched...him on the raw. ... Was it possible that I disturbed his dreams as he had disturbed mine?"

The International Commission of Jurists in 1967 issued the following evaluation of Haiti: "It is difficult to describe the present state of affairs with accuracy. The systematic violation of every single article and paragraph of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seems to be the only policy which is respected and assiduously pursued in the Caribbean republic. The rule of law was long ago displaced by a reign of terror and the personal will of its dictator, who has awarded himself the title of Life President of the Republic, and appears to be more concerned with the suppression of real or imaginary attempts against his life than with governing the country. He is leading his nation, not in a direction of prosperity, but toward the final disaster that can be seen in its political, social and economic collapse."

9. President John F. Kennedy was convinced that Papa Doc had to be removed, both for the good of the Haitian people and for the stability of the Caribbean basin. Privately, Kennedy had vowed to associates that he would destroy Duvalier. In 1962, the Kennedy administration had cut off virtually all aid to the Duvalier regime. With the clandestine assistance of the U.S. Embassy, a *coup d'etat* against Duvalier was planned for April 11, 1963, under the command of Gen. Gerard Constant; however, at the last moment Constant declined, convinced that Papa Doc was dying. Without his leadership and without U.S. support, the *coup* went forward with disastrous results, unleashing a vengeful response by Duvalier that was extreme even by his own brutal standards. The U.S. reacted by issuing five official protests. When all protest went unanswered, Kennedy rushed war ships to Haiti. The new Dominican president, Juan Bosch, threatened to do the same; however, he privately suggested to Kennedy that sending a psychiatrist to Duvalier would be more effective. Under U.S. leadership, the Organization of American States (O.A.S.) responded to what was now an international outcry for Papa Doc's removal. With the U.S.S. Boxer and a marine expeditionary force visible in Port-Au-Prince Harbor, Duvalier taunted his opponents: "If the O.A.S. claims the right to intervene because of repressed internal conditions, why don't they land troops in Alabama? ... No foreigner is going to tell me what to do." On May 7, the United States evacuated its citizens and non-essential diplomatic personnel. The *New York Herald Tribune* editorialized, "Duvalier's black magic...which metamorphosizes so easily into red magic, can no longer be accepted by us as a purely internal affair. And that is why we must take the bull by the horns and envision intervening now." Amazingly, the U.S. and the O.A.S. lost momentum as Duvalier toyed with the world. He stalled for time by demanding a withdrawal of the tough-talking U.S. Ambassador Thurston as a prerequisite to a improved

U.S.-Haitian relations. Duvalier temporarily outfoxed the U.S., seemingly delaying the inevitable. But the inevitable never came, because on November 22, 1963, JFK was assassinated. That night, the city of Port-Au-Prince was blacked out except for the presidential palace, where Papa Doc and his entourage celebrated Kennedy's death well into the night. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson restored the flow of American aid to Duvalier's starved nation.

10. U.S. policy toward Haiti during Richard Nixon's presidency, with Henry Kissinger first serving as National Security Advisor and then later as Secretary of State, can only be described as one of benign neglect. The majority of President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger's attention was focused on extricating the U.S. military from the morass of Vietnam, establishing relations with China, and building a relationship with the then-Soviet Union. Under Dr. Kissinger's policy of *realpolitik*, little concern was shown for human rights abuses. To this day, Dr. Kissinger justifies his lack of concern for human rights by insisting that "constructive engagement" of repressive regimes eventually leads to freedom of the repressed citizens of a nation. When I asked J3 in a recent telephone conversation about the benefits of *realpolitik* as espoused by Dr. Kissinger, J3 bluntly replied, "He was full of crap then and he's full of crap now. Ask him what his beliefs would be if he lived in Haiti or Cambodia, instead of on the East Side of Manhattan."
11. Nelson Rockefeller's performance in Haiti is one of the strangest events to occur in the strange history of U.S.-Haitian relations. Rockefeller, then governor of New York, arrived in Haiti on the last stop of a Latin American fact-finding mission. His trip had been a disaster, characterized by anti-American demonstrations, diplomatic snubs and what can only be described as embarrassing and unpleasant incidents. Rockefeller, by his own admission, was surprised and delighted at the warm and welcoming reception he received in Haiti. With 30,000 people cheering and waving American flags outside the palace balcony, Rockefeller was probably correct when he later testified that he simply was carried away and responded as a politician. Although he later regretted his action, the genie was out of the bottle, and Papa Doc had scored an incredible propaganda victory.
12. Fort Dimanche was the main killing ground for the Duvalier regime. Very few who entered ever left alive. The horrors were unspeakable and far beyond the comprehension of any civilized human being. Starvation and brutality was everywhere, as were tuberculosis and other diseases. During their successive regimes the Duvaliers slaughtered at least 50,000 people. Additionally, hundreds of thousands were tortured, many in the basement of the national palace, enabling the comfortably ensconced Papa Doc to watch the torture of his fellow citizens through one-way mirrors from a lavishly furnished private room.
13. Jean-Claude Duvalier, 19, was installed as president-for-life on April 22, 1971, which of course was his father's lucky number, 22. Jean-Claude ruled for almost 15 years in spite of unanimous predictions by the international intelligence and foreign service community that he could not last for even a year. One of the reasons for Baby Doc's longevity is the phenomenal increase in development aid that he received from the United States. In 1974, the amount was \$9.3 million. In 1975, it was a whopping \$35.5 million. Baby Doc used the money not for development but to line his pockets and pay off the Tonton Macoutes, whose support was essential to his ongoing power.

The huge increase in U.S. aid was attributable to the advocacy of U.S. Rep. Daniel Flood (D-Pennsylvania). Flood, the powerful chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Education and Welfare, supported aid for Haiti in exchange for bribes. "Here, put my share right here," said Flood, pointing to an open drawer in his desk, during a fateful exchange with Lucien Rigaud, a prosperous Swiss-trained businessman who represented Haiti's interests in Washington. Flood subsequently was tried and convicted.
14. Sen. Everett McKinley Dirksen (R-Illinois) was Senate Minority Leader. He was known in political circles as "the wizard of ooze" for his flowery speech and melodious voice. Detractors of Dirksen claimed he gargled with honey every day to maintain his vocal cords. Among other things, Dirksen is famous for having observed in reference to federal spending, "a billion here and a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money." He also said of politics, "I am a man of unbending principles, the first of which is always to be flexible."
15. Remarkably, when the end came for Jean-Claude Duvalier it was swift and brutal. Jean-Claude had only left Haiti on one occasion, a childhood trip to France. Amid mounting international pressure on Duvalier to leave Haiti, rumors of his departure began to spread, including a premature announcement to that effect on February 2 by White House spokesman Larry Speakes. One of the oddest aspects of Jean-Claude's reaction to his situation was his attempt to gain asylum in either Greece or Spain, despite the facts that both nations were unsympathetic to deposed dictators and that Duvalier had no known ties to either country. Eventually France agreed to accept the Duvaliers and, as J3 points out, after several false starts they eventually left Haiti. According to columnist Jack Anderson, Lt. Col. Oliver North was furious in his suspicion that Jean-Claude had taken \$12,000 of "our money" kept in a secret bank account in Haiti, which illegally funded the Nicaraguan Contras.

16. During his speech at the 1964 Republican National Convention accepting the party's nomination for U.S. President, Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) uttered a quote that, fairly or unfairly, ever-after defined him in many people's estimation as an extremist. I present the full quote here in the context of the speech: "...let our (cause) not be made fuzzy and futile by unthinking and stupid labels. Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue. The beauty of the very system we are pledged to restore and revitalize, the beauty of this Federal system of ours, is in its reconciliation of diversity and unity. We must not see malice in honest differences of opinion, no matter how great, so long as they are not inconsistent with the pledges we have given to each other in and through the Constitution."

Chapter Eleven: Jack

1. Burning Tree Country Club, Bethesda, Maryland, is known as the President's Country Club for its practice of extending an honorary membership to each sitting U.S. President.
2. Joseph P. Kennedy (1898 – 1969) was one of the richest men in the United States, having made a fortune in the stock market, Hollywood and during Prohibition. He served as the first chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission and as Franklin Roosevelt's Ambassador to the Court of St. James (England), the first Irish-American ever to serve in that capacity. Kennedy vehemently opposed the United States' entry into World War II, and ultimately was dismissed from his ambassadorship by FDR for his isolationism. Kennedy briefly toyed with the idea of running for president on more than one occasion, but essentially devoted the rest of his life to the pursuit of putting a Kennedy in the White House, a goal he eventually realized.
3. Bradlee, Benjamin C., *Conversations with Kennedy*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1975.
4. In 440 B.C., the Greek historian, Herodotus, included in his *History* a story of the encounter between the Lydian King Croesus, reckoned as one of the richest men in the world, and Solon, the wise Athenian.
5. Rep. George Smathers (D-Fla.) served first in the U.S. House of Representatives and later in the U.S. Senate. Smathers and Kennedy were both bachelors at the time of their visit to Cuba. The two had legendary, enduring reputations as ladies' men.
6. *Cabrito* is a Puerto Rican delicacy of goat meat, slowly roasted for hours and served with fresh vegetables.
7. Lopez Mateos served as president of Mexico from 1958 to 1964. He was an extremely popular candidate when elected at the age of 47. He appealed to both the intellectuals and the masses, promising to revive the ideas of the Revolution. He expanded the social security system, implemented a constitutional amendment requiring profit-sharing with labor by private companies, and launched an aggressive public health campaign against polio, tuberculosis and malaria. He also redistributed 30 million acres of land to private farmers and village co-ops known as *ejidos*. Under his administration, illiteracy dropped to 38 percent of the population in 1960 compared to 80 percent in 1910. Despite generally positive reviews, Lopez Mateos' administration was flawed by blatant corruption and wanton disregard for human rights and due process.
8. The Chamizal district had become a flashpoint between the United States and Mexico when the Rio Grande River, which marks the U.S.-Mexican border, changed its course. As a result, 440 acres of land that had been on the Mexico side of the river reverted to the U.S. side. Because of Mexico's large territorial loss to the United States a century earlier, Chamizal became a point of national pride with the Mexicans. Kennedy and Lopez Mateos agreed on the return of the territory, and two years later Chamizal was officially returned to Mexico amid great fanfare.
9. Adolfo Ruiz Cortines served as president of Mexico from 1952 to 1958. He was considered a conservative. By his own admission, the majority of Mexican citizens did not benefit sufficiently from his administration, though he did increase the number of health care clinics to 226 from 42, and the number of worker hospitals to more than 100 from fewer than 20.
10. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (P.R.I.) is the longest ruling national party in the world, exceeding the Communist Party in the former Soviet Union. It has ruled Mexico since 1929 in one incarnation or another. Originally known as the National Revolutionary Party (P.N.R.), it changed its name in 1946 to today's current P.R.I. Although a movement toward pluralism is underway today in Mexico, the P.R.I. has been remarkably successful in maintaining its stranglehold on the Mexican body politic.

11. The *Dedazo*, or “the touch,” refers to the P.R.I. custom of allowing the then-sitting president to “tap on the shoulder” of his successor. Although Lopez Mateos was considered a dark horse, many political commentators speculated that, in selecting him, Ruiz Cortines was admitting his Conservative government policies had failed the average citizen. He believed Lopez Mateos could achieve for the citizenry what he had failed to do himself. (The *Dedazo* is sometimes translated, incorrectly, as “the big finger.”)
12. *La Mordida*, “the bite,” is a euphemism used by Mexicans to describe bribery. The bite is systemic in Mexican society, and ranges from the cop on the beat to the presidency. It is an accepted way of life in Mexico. No one is immune from it, and nothing much gets done without it.
13. I am grateful to Eli C. Allen, an expert on Mexican politics and sociology. Mr. Allen provided me with invaluable assistance in researching and understanding the systemic and growing corruption and human rights abuses in Mexico, which increasingly are fueled by the international drug trade. In addition to confirming J3’s observations, he offered many insights into the Mexican oligarchy’s involvement at the very highest levels in both the drug business and in state-sanctioned torture and human-rights abuses. When I asked him about an American consultant from Connecticut who, in the course of my research, had sent me position papers on Mexico denying rampant lawlessness and corruption there, Mr. Allen offered a blunt assessment: “He has his head up his ass. Of course, that’s what he’d like people to believe. That’s the side his bread is buttered on.” I also asked for his opinion on recent legislation passed by the Mexican government regarding drugs, money-laundering and respect for human rights. He observed, “There’s a big difference between passing laws and enforcing them. The Mexican oligarchy has no intention of enforcing them.”
14. Any airplane carrying the President of the United States is designated Air Force One. At the time to which J3 refers during the Kennedy administration, the official aircraft permanently assigned as Air Force One was a custom-equipped Boeing 707 jet specially outfitted for the travel, communications and security needs of the President.
15. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the Patron Saint of Mexico, the most important symbol to the country’s overwhelmingly Roman Catholic population.
16. A *casa chica*, or “little house,” is the residence occupied by a man’s mistress. Amongst the ruling elite in Mexico, status inures to any man with more than one *casa chica*. Lopez Mateos had several *casa chicas*, befitting of his high station in Mexican society.
17. *Los Pinos*, “The Pines,” is the official residence of the President of Mexico.
18. Dave Powers functioned as an all-around advisor and Mr. Fix-It to John Kennedy, and served as unofficial chief of staff while Kennedy was President. He and Kenneth O’Donnell collaborated on the book, *Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye* (Little Brown, New York, 1972).
19. J3 is correct in noting the defining role Cuba played in the Kennedy administration – first in the ill-fated, so-called “Bay of Pigs” invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles (supported clandestinely by the U.S. government and C.I.A.), then in 1962 when the discovery of Russian missile placements in Cuba sparked the “Cuban Missile Crisis” and brought the U.S. and Soviets as close to nuclear war as the world had ever come.
20. The “Frank” referred to by Kennedy was the singer Frank Sinatra, who was an early and enthusiastic supporter of Kennedy’s presidential campaign. Sinatra organized the entertainment for Kennedy’s inaugural celebration in January 1961. After Kennedy was elected President, he had a falling out with Sinatra when Kennedy’s younger brother, Robert, then U.S. attorney general, insisted the President not stay at Sinatra’s Palm Springs complex during a California trip because of Sinatra’s alleged ties to organized crime. Subsequently, Sinatra switched parties and became a strong supporter of Republican Richard Nixon in the 1968 campaign. Although he was not close to Nixon, Sinatra struck up a friendship with Nixon’s vice president, Spiro T. Agnew, who later was indicted and pleaded *nolo contendere* to charges of bribery and tax evasion.
21. Allen Dulles (1893 – 1969) was Director of Central Intelligence under Eisenhower. Although a government official and supposedly neutral in the election, Dulles is rumored to have helped Kennedy throughout the 1960 campaign in an attempt to curry favor with the Kennedy camp and retain his position as D.C.I. Richard M. Nixon, who lost to Kennedy in 1960 but won the presidency in 1968, believed Dulles had provided Kennedy-confidant Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) with sensitive classified information and other assistance to bolster Kennedy’s campaign. Whatever the circumstances, Kennedy reappointed Dulles as D.C.I. After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, however, Dulles lost Kennedy’s confidence, and he stepped down in November 1961 as head of the Central Intelligence Agency.