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3.1 - KETCHUP

(Epistle 12/6/62)

Dear Sally,

Time for lots of ketchup—almost two months since I wrote last!—but time disappeared between classes, work, and La Marina. The Gin Mill is my other house on the Isle of Scorpions. Also November was an exhausting month for many reasons, as you will soon discover, and I just couldn't get it together. Tonight I'm feeling kind of flu and sitting at home all alone getting some rest. So get ready for a long one! Mozart flutes on the record player. Over the closet an Egyptian holds a scale with a feather and a soul. Joel is gone to a movie at that theatre down Magazine, and Raj is off at the Seven Seas, that beatnik place with the fishnets. Tonight Terry is studying hard for an exam. Yes, about Terry, but all in good time.

Even with Raj living with us here at the Rising Sun, there's still been no nookie. He sleeps on our cot. But he has no money and of course can't really look for a job. I feed him in the cafeteria sometimes and buy him lots of Campbell's soup and curry. It's such joy being near him so much of the time, even if there is nary a caress. Only those Hindu eyes so full of warmth for me. The frustration has been driving me wild. Add to that a few weeks ago when Rose decided to reform—to stop the Holy Carouse—so I've really missed dancing with her in La Marina. She wanted me to stop too, but I simply can't. Now she's seeing my old lab partner Ben, and they almost never come down to the Quarter. Rose and I danced together like a dream. Right now there's a little Latin girl Pablita who shows up sometimes, and we dance a lot. She waits for her boyfriend to get off at one of the Bourbon Street bars and just wants to dance, which suits me fine. The loss of Rose, which was a terrible shock, was only partially made up for by a new affair—with the aforementioned Terry. At risk of boring, here's the whole story, which is rather unique in my not too innocent experience. Yet again please forgive the prurient details.

One evening in that somewhat more relaxed last half-hour in the cafeteria without those continuous lines of trays coming at me, I was just hanging on the register waiting for the next bunch coming my way. It was a tallish new fellow I'd seen around and his girlfriend, a short, rather chubby, but cute girl. I automatically swept their trays with my eyes, ran my internal adding machine, and dinged up the \$5.22. I turned to the guy for the money, but the girl behind him took out her purse. Looking straight at me, he said hi. I just about fell over. It was Tony Perkins standing right there in my customer line! Looking like in the movie "Phaedra." I was speechless. Paying me, the girl also said hi. "I'm Sharon," she said, "and this is Terry. We were wondering if you'd have dinner with us." I'd never been invited eat with a total stranger before, especially such a curious couple, so I agreed. Only about five more minutes till we closed. They got a good table by the window, and I stood there, stunned, while Hazel broke down line two and removed pans. (Small break while I put on Tchaikovsky's "Capriccio Italienne.")

While we ate, Terry explained that they'd decided I'm the most interesting person on campus. (Sure fire way to strike up a friendship!) Having heard my reputation for frequenting

rough sailor bars, they really wanted to find out about it all. For effect I told them about Mary's over in the Irish Channel, a place even the police don't go. But that's what they were saying about La Marina only a year ago. I agreed to take them out that night when I got off.

At eleven while I was totaling up the bank and report, there they were, handsome Terry, and cheerful, fat Sharon, whose father is the chairman of a major corporation we aren't supposed to mention. We took a cab, Sharon's treat, straight to Toulouse and Decatur. Of course, the moment we walked in the door of La Marina, we were in that ecstatic madness of merengue, and they looked at the crowds wide-eyed in amazement. Drinks at the back of the bar where the crowd's thinner, beers for Terry and me, vodka for Sharon. I wondered about letting her pay all the time, but Terry reminded me she's rich.

They met several of my chums, like Rose of course, Rafael, a new roué from school, and Leah, the girl with enormous eyes like Betty Boop. Leah and I invented this wonderful dance which can be done to your basic pachanga beat. It takes a lot of room because you leap and bound about in a curious fashion. We patriotically call the "President Kennedy," and it always gets applause. Rose won't try it. She says it's too undignified. She taught Terry a merengue, and meanwhile at the bar with me, Sharon started getting very drunk on just her second drink, all giddiness and laughter. To my surprise, she flirted with me. Naturally I advised her of certain realities concerning my sexual self, which seemed to sober her up quite a bit.

Soon Raj arrived with Felicia, of course (sigh!). After meeting the newcomers to La Marina, he took me aside to stools by the end wall to ask, "Who is this fat girl? She doesn't belong here. You shouldn't have brought them." Raj sounded so stern I was shocked. Very shortly Rose went with the others to the Gin Mill, leaving me alone with my "tourists," as she called them. To me such attitudes from my dearest friends meant I should keep an eye out. As I watched Sharon having more vodkas and tonic, she got more and more sullen, while Terry kept talking and talking to her at the bar. When they were ready to go home, it was nearly two on a Wednesday morning. I rode in the cab with them to school, intending to walk home from there.

In the taxi Terry sat in the middle with Sharon sobbing on his other shoulder. Meanwhile down between us on the dark seat, our hands found each other. What an exquisite feeling, that first touch, the electricity of fingertips. Of course, I immediately lost my mind with lust but could do nothing. Instead, I asked Sharon if she was okay, and she sniffled that it was just the full moon. When we'd seen her into her dorm, Terry told me she's always a weepy drunk.

Standing on the moonlit sidewalk with him, our hands no longer touching, I couldn't say come home with me. (I've had guys there with Joel at home, but not now with Raj living there.) As we started down the sidewalk, I regretfully said I'd head home, and Terry walked with me. Strolling along beneath live oaks and palms of fancy Newcomb Place in the moonlight, the beautiful guy told me about his difficulties with his mother and struggle with being gay. The first I thought were actually rather childish, and the second unnecessarily convoluted. I guess I'm blest, having no reason to agonize over the matter. When I understood I was homosexual, I accepted it like the facts of brown eyes and being 5'11" tall. But at the urging of certain of my hormones, I tried very hard to be sympathetic to Terry's traumas.

At St. Charles Avenue, instead of going down Audubon Street, I led us into the Park. (Wait! Record's over, and time to put on *Midsummer Night's Dream*—though this was really a warm mid-November night.) In the dense shadows along the oak drive we held hands again. Out on the golf course a thin layer of mist hovered, shoulder-high, and gleamed in the full moon. We moved our arms gracefully through it as though swimming in a glowing lake to the dark island of a golf-green along the lagoon. Glittering dew on the grass where we sat. All around a faery

nightscape, and before you could say Jack Robinson, two naked faeries were frolicking in the magical moonlit mist. But the details—yes, you'll want details. Hmmm... Let's just say that, quite out of season, a maypole bloomed that night on the umpteenth green! I mean, how does someone get so big? Supernatural! Almost religious—like a one-eyed idol! It was really late when Terry kissed me under our bushes and left for his dorm. Strangely, Joel wasn't home, but Raj was sound asleep, snoring.

The next afternoon I found Terry in the Snack Bar at the table under the clock. When he saw me, his eyes were happy, but... As I sat down with him, he said, "Last night Sharon slit her wrists." No, she didn't die. They stitched her up in the Infirmary. Of course, I was concerned, but Terry felt guilty. Knowing he was attracted to me, she... On the walk to the Rising Sun, it took a good deal of arguing to convince him he wasn't responsible for what Sharon did. Nor was I.

In an awkward session in my narrow bed with Terry's leg(s), I magnificently perpetrated my lust in his curvaceous behind. Then I had no choice but to lodge my gargantuan guest in the mezzanine, which he thought was rather comfortable. For me it was close, but sphinctorially speaking, no cigar. Afterwards he told me he wanted to be with Sharon like I was with Rose, and then we could be together, too. Then he added, "So nobody will know." I exploded. "What do you mean, nobody know? I don't play that kind of game." And I didn't use my beautiful Rose like that. We loved each other very much, only not the way she wanted. How many nights she slept in my bed, her innocence there for me to take, but I felt no desire, unless it was one recalled for an errant Greek sailor boy of the evening.

On his way over to the Infirmary to see Sharon and on my way to work, Terry started in on how you shouldn't let people in general know you're gay. I don't carry a sign, but I'm certainly not going to hide it. He claimed it's dangerous being openly gay, but I haven't encountered any problem in the world I live in. Of course, that's on campus during the day and on the French Quarter waterfront late at night, and I guess both are different planets. Terry was obviously pretty repressed and afraid of what people think of him. Me, I figure if they don't like me, fuck 'em. And if they do, same thing. I know my path, and they should look to theirs. My path is the way of decadence, of delirious dissolution! I'm a dervish in the Divine Debauch!

The next couple weeks while Sharon was in the Infirmary for a "rest," Terry frequently went out with Rose and me to La Marina and to the Gin Mill. Rose seemed to like him fairly well, though I could tell she was pretty jealous about us. When Sharon got out with her cuts almost healed, she wore long-sleeved blouses to cover her bandages, but her spirits seemed up. She and I even got chummy in the Snack Bar. But thank goodness, she wouldn't go out to the Quarter anymore. Meanwhile, Terry and I would meet at the Rising Sun between classes in the afternoon or in his dorm room in Irby House. I had very few ways to handle his tremendous phallus, and it frustrated us both something fierce. We'd get into arguments and squabble over nonsense. Finally I discovered a trick that, shall we say, completed the circle, and afterwards with frequent application, we got along a lot better.

On the night of the Beaux Artes Ball, Rose and I went as Pygmalion and Galatea, the sculptor and statue. Marvelous itchy-bitsy chiton and ivy in my hair—oops! Time out for an unavoidable digression. At the ball I found Pete, my long lost beloved Pete—masqued as a cute pony with a long black mane. He took off the head and talked with me a while on the sidelines, very friendly but still distant. God, how I still love him! Glorifying in his beauty and remembering the kiss of his lips, I listened to how he's moved into an apartment on Royal Street down from Brennan's and invited me to a party in a couple weeks—oops again!

Second level digression and time shift. When I went to Pete's party, I ran into Mark, my first conquest last year in the dorm. He seemed rather interested in me suddenly, maybe my infamy... But he didn't really do it for me anymore. Maybe I'm jaded already. I was focused almost entirely on Pete, who greeted me warmly and then very clearly avoided me as he mingled with his many guests. I ended up going back to my old dorm with a freshman Architecture friend of Pete's named Ian, a cute curly-headed Jewish boy with perfect apple cheeks—four of them. While giving Ian the complete treatment, I pumped him, so to speak, about Pete but got no useful information. When I saw Ian the next night in the cafeteria he was distant. I chalked him up as a very tasty one-night stand and no help whatsoever. End of second digression.

Return to first. While Pete talked with me at the Beaux Artes Ball, his magical blue eyes kept dropping to my bare chest, giving me wild hope. He remarked appreciatively about my beautiful girlfriend. Rose was in fact fabulously divine in gauzy veils and her golden hair up in that Grecian fall. I told him about dancing in La Marina, but he seemed distracted. I leaned close and said softly, "Pete, what I said back then—that night—is still true." He looked at me, those aquamarine eyes blank, and asked, "What did you say?" (Could he truly not remember? I really said, "Oh, Pete, I love you so much!") He smiled innocently and added, "I don't remember." The pain of losing him again, now nearly a year later, and I just said, "Oh, nothing..." Let him go back to his straight friends. End of digression.

After the Beaux Artes Ball, Rose and I paraded in our costumes on a round through the Napoleon House, La Marina, and the Gin Mill where the sailors thought we were spectacular. Terry met us with our clothes, and while I was changing in the restroom, he started complaining about me letting the sailors put their hands all over me. I joked that it almost sounded like he cared, and he quickly changed the subject. All the weeks together, and he and I never spoke about any feelings for each other. We never talked about love or tomorrow together. We were just today. As a matter of fact, we mostly seemed to talk about his mother problems and fears or inadequacies. It got to be pretty boring, and so to avoid such depressing topics, I'd always get him into the sack as soon as possible.

Terry came home with me that night since Joel was away. Well, after another less than remarkable orgasm, he starts crying, and we spend about an hour on the woes of having a cock that's just too damned big. What's really surprising is whenever he gets an erection, he says it gives him a headache—all the blood rushing to it. Not that I particularly want such a log between my legs, but it would be nice if he were a bit more dimensionally endowed. (I've put a tape measure on my erection and find it just shy (and sweet) of six inches. A versatile size.) When I asked him if he can get it into a girl, he laughed. Sharon managed with not too much difficulty. Suddenly I understood more of her behavior and joked that he really should stick to women—even if they can't give him what I was about to insinuate again into his nether region.

Believe it or not, Terry took me seriously and started making it with Sharon fairly regularly. She drifted around on a sea of contentment and several times insisted on taking us out to eat in expensive restaurants—Commander's Palace, Galatoire's. I was most definitely out of my element. Right then was when Rose abandoned our proud party ship and left me desolate. Thank goodness, Terry comes many afternoons over to the Rising Sun for my brand of pleasure, but he also doesn't go at night to the Quarter anymore. Why do people keep sliding back into normalcy? Why are they giving up the Holy Carouse, abandoning the ceremonies of dance? For what? What do they do at midnight when the fire of inspiration is in them? When a cumbia is required! I've no conception of the "quiet life" Rose says she wants to live, and I don't want to

know. As a gay boy, I've got an obligation to live festively. And if life is a carousel, then living should be carousing!

Of course, at the present moment I am reclining here on my mattress, wretchedly a-bed and a-fevered. Several aspirins ago and about a quart of water. All wrapped up now with Soler harpsichords tittering. I expect Terry's conjugal visits to this same bed will probably be coming to an end soon, but it doesn't worry me. It's that thing of freedom. Of course I do love screwing him, but it's getting to be a distraction from my larger purpose, which is... Ha! I bet you thought I was going to tell you. Actually, I guess my larger purpose is to find the guy who will make me want to be with no other. Nowadays at four in the afternoon I poke it in Terry, and by midnight I'm lusting for some macho muchacho in La Marina. I guess I'm just a fickle faerie.

I've also had some excitement the past couple weeks of a very different sort. You see, I've gotten to know several of the more political students, both through work and at various parties round the Quarter. They're very liberal and impressed by my "bravery" in simply being myself (another sure conversational trick to make friends). Of course, I've long had a serious reputation amongst the fraternity types as the "queer cashier." Now I don't flame in any way, and I don't swish (except occasionally in merengues!), or lisp. But I also don't hide my interest in guys--I look into their eyes. Actually I find being infamous quite fun. Anyhow, these "activists" particularly like my long hair—almost three inches now, a raggedy pageboy. (Joel and I trim each other's hair off and on, but we're both comfy with it longer.) Whatever...

One evening while I'm at work in the Snack Bar in come Gene and Norma with a Negro guy, and they march down the serving line with him. Behind the counter Georgette, who's also a Negro, looked at the guy with big eyes but served up his order. At the drinks line JoLynn gave him a big grin. While the three of them simply got their food, everyone else stood there like dopes watching. It made me want to laugh. At my register Gene introduced the Negro guy as Ronald. He was quite attractive, and we shook hands. His eyes were bright, but frightened too.

After paying me, they sat at a table along the front wall, just like anybody else, to eat their sandwiches, etc. However, it wasn't two minutes before Mr. Carlton, the night manager, and a campus security guy came busting out of the back office and stood by my island watching. Mr. Carlton asked me why I took the Negro's money, and I laughed. Gene paid for them all, I explained and turned my attention to a customer. But I heard him tell the campus cop that the "nigger" wasn't a student at Tulane and should be thrown out. That's what they did, of course, before the poor guy could eat his food even. The whole thing really made me feel awful.

But the next night, who appears in the Snack Bar but Gene with Norma again, a guy with a tiny beard named Vincent, and two Negroes, a man and a woman. Again everything was silent as they came through the line, and again I got introduced, this time to Gerald and Claudine, with handshakes and friendly smiles. Gerald made to pay, but since I well knew Mr. Carlton's policy now, I suggested someone else pay for it—which Vincent did and thanked me for being "solid, man." Before they even made it to a table with their trays, Mr. Carlton appeared through the back door with two policemen!

They were the big, mean-looking kind of cop. They just stood by my register with that asshole manager again and watched. The biggest one with the bulbous nose leaned on my counter, blocking one whole lane for customers, and asked me if I knew those "freaks with the niggers." Taken aback by his obvious hate, I said I'd seen them around, but then I saw most everyone in school. The cop glowered at me, and I ignored him for my customers, who were all very nervous what with Negroes out there and the police hanging around. The cops got some coffee, sat at the long counter, and still just watched.

In a few minutes Sandra came out from behind the line to give me my fifteen-minute break. After the restroom, I also got a cup of coffee and right before the policemen's eyes went straight over to the table of 'freaks and niggers' where I was made most welcome. Vincent explained what they doing there with Gerald and Claudine was called a "sit-in." You well know, Sally, I most certainly do not believe in segregation. I'd love to make love to a Negro man. What the hell! The stranger the better. How wonderful to make love with a Chinaman, with an Indian! Sigh! If they come in the male variety, I'd even like to try a Martian. At any rate, I wished them all good luck and went back to my register.

The big cop beset me again, asking what we talked about over there, and I offhandedly replied, "Mostly Martians." He called me a smart ass college prick and went back to Mr. Carlton. They decided that as manager he'd go over to the freaks ask them to leave. If they did, then fine. If they didn't, the cops would arrest them. Mr. Carlton came back very angry. They'd said that as Tulane students they had the right to bring their friends into the Snack Bar. So the cops went over and arrested the five of them. Everyone was flabbergasted as they were forcibly escorted out the door. Going back to his office, Mr. Carlton snapped at me, "Get a haircut." I don't let it get to me. I'm the best cashier they'll ever have, and they know it, long hair or not.

Over the next couple weeks, though not while I was working, some of Vincent's friends brought more Negroes into the Snack Bar and cafeteria and always wound up getting arrested or just kicked out. The next thing you know, they're going to court to try and break the will of Paul Tulane, the founder. It seems Tulane is supposed to be for "young southern gentlemen." Well, most here are from New York and Jewish, (We joke that the three colleges here are Jewcomb, Jewlane, and Goyola.), and I can scarcely be called a gentleman, southern or otherwise. At any rate, such is my modest adventure in politics—and encounter with the police, which I have no desire ever to do again.

I should probably go to sleep now and hope to wake up well. Ciaou, my friend.

Always, Tommy

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3.2 - NOW AND EVER SHALL BE

Going back to New Orleans from Chicago was very disturbing to me. I quite disliked that cold northern city (where my cousin is in the restaurant trade), and New Orleans was the only place I dared to go, although it holds such painful memories of perfect Anne who would not love me. I stayed on Barracks Street in a totally empty apartment owned by the business associate of my father, Tom, the one who hosted the big party for the last Mardi Gras. At night in the large empty room, I read the powerful and disturbing novel "Crime and Punishment" which Tommy once spoke of and slept a great deal on my thin mat of blankets. Occasionally I went out to a corner bar for beer. I couldn't bring myself to contact Tommy, my only tie to this city. I would only be intruding on his life again. Part of the reason I went away to Chicago was to set him free of his love for me. (I was tempted to such love-making with him but chose not to.) In that terrible city of Chicago I purged myself of those things and even stopped smoking cigarettes.

However, one Saturday night when I was in a small jazz joint called Cosimo's, as was inevitable, I saw a Quarter faerie named Lee who also knows Tommy. Although Lee and I did not speak to one another, I was certain that he'd pass word along to my faerie friend. The next night I went back to the same place and waited for him. A wonderful Miles Davis piece was playing on the jukebox when Tommy appeared, his beautiful blond hair getting so long. That same smile of adoration which nearly swept me away before, but now I stood firm. We talked and drank beer for hours in the quiet there, his mind chasing thoughts at a furious pace.

Later he came back to the Barracks pad with me where we talked by the light of a candle in a bottle, sitting on the bare floor drinking wine together. I offered him my mat and said that as a Hindu fakir I can sleep even on nails, but he curled up on the floor with his arm for a pillow, so very much like a child. As he slept, I watched over him, realizing how painful it is for him, but how compulsively he needs to be with me. Yet I can do no other than bring him this pain.

Now that my visa is expiring, I must soon think of going back to India where the future is a foregone conclusion. I shall take a position in my cousin's civil engineering firm, and there will be a suitably obedient wife and many children. My mother will boast of her manly son. But if I even once were to make love with Tommy, I fear I would not ever want anything else. These are the attractions I have put away, and it pains me that Tommy must suffer. But he bears the burden of it graciously. In the morning when I awoke, he sat all golden in bright sun from the window, knees drawn up under his chin, watching me sleep. It's his mysterious androgyny. His body, while so masculine with the blond curls on his chest, could so easily be a beautiful woman.

For another fifteen days or so I kept going to Cosimo's, and Tommy begged me to come back to La Marina with him. Somehow I simply couldn't. Many times he stayed with me on Barracks, claiming to enjoy roughing it. Meanwhile he was spending much time with that lovely girl Rose who used to go with the Jewish boy Ken. She came to Cosimo's with him once to see me again and urged me to come to their newly discovered Greek bar. Not there, but I did agree to go for a short while with them to La Marina.

When they danced together, it was obvious to me that Rose was totally in love with Tommy. As I would have liked also to be the lover of Rose, the situation could have been a perfect triangle. But I decided in Chicago to hold myself apart from these wild young Americans. I would not become entangled in their sexual madness. They are mad, even Tommy, though it is I who have made him so. One afternoon when we had swum in the pool at the University Center and were sunning on the patio, Tommy told me about taking a young Greek sailor home and making noisy love all night long. I asked him why he becomes involved with such wild people, and he replied, "You." He wanted me to feel guilty, but that is an emotion I have no use for.

I have found strength of will from that horrible time in Chicago. My socialist philosophy was sorely offended by that terrible city and the capitalistic attitudes of the employers. After nearly a dozen attempts, I found work in a brewery stacking crates of beer while living in an old hotel on the south side for \$2.50 a night. The work was exhausting, but it gave me money to go out. The people on Rush Street at night were so much different from the carousers in the French Quarter. In Chicago there is no abandon to the joy of sheer debauchery. Everywhere it was couples, and nowhere could I find girls to my taste. (Also, although my ancestry is the most authentic Aryan, I learned in some of the bars that to Americans I'm "more like a nigger than a white man.") So I sometimes went into the black peoples' bars where I was made very welcome.

However, their plight in this country only added to my socialist depression, and I stopped going out. I lay on my bed in the hotel reading the works of Owen. By the time I had finished, I was still more disgusted with this exploitative side of America. The several weeks of hard work helped me purge earlier preoccupations and focus my thinking on the cruel necessities of the workers of the world. Having learned a lesson from the experience, I returned to New Orleans only to see that it is just as corrupt as Chicago, though in its own way. The masses of (mostly black) poor people here have so little hope. But I must admit I find this much better here than at home in India where democracy is so mixed up with caste, royalty, and divine rule.

And some day I shall be forced to go back there. That thought plagued me as I sat alone in Cosimo's, and in desperation I decided that after all I will have to find an American girl to marry me. A solution several people already suggested, I did not feel right about marrying for such a reason. Yet reconsidering the situation now convinced me otherwise. That evening when Tommy came in as usual to see me, he suggested we go tomorrow night with Rose and another girl named Felicia to see a film called "Walk on the Wild Side." We met at the moving picture house on Canal Street. Rose was particularly lovely in her earth-goddess fashion, her hair in seductive disarray, and Tommy and she made a striking couple. I was pleased that this Felicia turned out to be a rather shapely woman with brown hair and a shy, innocent smile.

We were unable, naturally, to speak much before the film, but Felicia seemed to be attracted to me. The film itself was quite powerful, being set right here where we too lived our wild lives, and Capucine was a truly sensuous heroine. Tommy was thrilled by the decadence of it all. Afterwards he jumped up and shouted, "Time to dance!" I couldn't refuse to go with them to their Greek bar, especially since Felicia was also quite keen on going. The Gin Mill was very dirty, but that is not to condemn it, for I know how filthy La Marina must in fact be behind all the darkness. It was full of grubby Greek sailors. After having only one vodka and tonic, Felicia became tipsy and affectionate with me. Tommy did a solo dance, arms raised as though to fly away, which spoke so clearly to me of his longing and pain. Pretty Rose watched Felicia and me with a knowing smile. And thus the New Orleans madness began anew.

For some weeks we all caroused together in the sailor bars, and Felicia and I became quite close. I realized soon that she might be a possibility for my marriage solution. Amusing to be with, she had a very active mind, an artistic viewpoint, and a strong sense of humor—and even persuaded me to dance occasionally. Tommy and Rose were almost always with us, like another couple, but not really. Since I couldn't take Felicia to the destitution of Barracks Street and couldn't go to her dormitory, we were unable to make love all summer. Of course, this meant that we came to know each other well, and meanwhile controlling the romantic urges kept us at a level of excitement and expectation that gave our "evenings" together (often till three or four o'clock in morning), special meaning. Some nights after the girls had gone home, Tommy came back to the empty apartment with me to lie on the floor, his presence was a great comfort.

To relieve my sexual frustration, late one night I walked up Rampart Street a few blocks out of the French Quarter, to an equally old sector where mostly the black people live. In a small corner bar with a Dixie Beer sign in neon, very dark except for jukebox lights, the many black faces watched me, well aware that I was not one of them. Soon after I spoke to one person at the bar, many men crowded around me laughing heartily about my foreign accent. Beyond the fact that they all liked me, I could hardly understand anything they said.

During our talk, I caught the eye of a very sleek young black woman, and without letting my eye go, she motioned me to come sit with her. The black men sent me to her with friendly encouragement. In only moments, the woman June had taken me to a small house on nearby St. Ann Street where she enveloped me in her strong, fragrant body. She was very athletic in bed, copulating twice with me, and then needed to return quickly to work. I apologized that I could not pay her money, and June replied, "For you, sugar, it's a free sample—on approval." On the way back to Barracks, I was light-hearted having made wild sex with a black whore.

In September Felicia moved from her dormitory to a small apartment on Oak Street close to the university. On the first night there I stayed with her, finally a place for us to be together. Candles were burning all around the new room as I removed Felicia's clothing and carefully prepared her body for sex. She was surprised and delighted by our coupling. In the moments following, I knew that I could easily marry this good woman Felicia. The crux of the matter was to convince her, and I had the good sense not to hurry things. We often went out to the bars in the evenings following, but I did not stay to sleep with Felicia more than once each week.

That was because also in September Tommy invited me to move in with him on Audubon Street, which I quickly accepted for several reasons. One of these was that my money from my Chicago earnings and my father's last gift were just about gone. Another was that I was tired of empty rooms, and Tommy's cot was more comfortable than the mat. Also it was much closer to Felicia's place. His housemate Joel, an intensely sensual Jewish boy, told me to make myself at home. I was amazed at the number of girls who visited his bed. On weekends when Rose also stayed over after the night's revelry, I left the cot to Tommy and slept on the floor again.

Actually living with him, the intimacy between us quickly grew to its old intensity. At times I believe Tommy was even happy—when he'd smile and stroke my cheek, or lean against me affectionately. For me it became a meditation of self-discipline, constantly reaffirming my resolve. If I were I given to feeling guilty, this was the perfect situation. Here I had to rely on Tommy for everything—he bought me food or fed me from the cafeteria and sometimes even gave me five dollars to go out—and I would not give him that one thing he wanted.

One evening we sat in the Music Room at the Napoleon House with brandy, and Tommy excitedly told me about going the night before to a party on a Greek ship, implying serious sexual exercises with the sailors which had left him somewhat sore. When I chided him for such promiscuity, Tommy toasted grandiosely, "A la dolce vita!" We sipped from our brandies, remembering details of that film. Then Tommy remarked, "The light here's almost amber, Raj, as though you and I could be here forever, floating in the amber glow of time." His words wrapped me in his love. Leaning close over the table with our snifters, we again shared that wordless communication and communion of our first nights together, like the painting by Rose over Tommy's bed of us leaning close in the La Marina darkness.

My hopes to marry Felicia grew stronger as she and I settled into a routine of about three nights each week going out to the French Quarter, a schedule which she had to set in order to do her work for classes. As I have noted, one of the nights each week I spent with her. (Actually, her bed was far too soft, and to Felicia's consternation after our copulation—which continued

quite energetic and satisfying—I slept on the floor.) The comfortable sexual schedule was a harmonious balance for the other chaste nights out with Tommy and Rose. At times they came to the Seven Seas to play ping pong with me on the patio. However, when he met that boy Terry, who is identical to the famous film actor Tony Perkins, I saw much less of my friend, and in the time on my own I explored the Quarter. An interesting place I found on the corner of Conti and Burgundy was a bar for female homosexuals. Some of the women talked with me about India, and many were exciting in the same strange androgynous way as Tommy.

On the nights out with Felicia, besides visiting our usual places, I sometimes took her to Cosimo's (for her first encounter with modern jazz music), or to Violet's on upper Chartres where a black woman sings what is called the blues. We took Tommy there the night Rose broke off their relationship, such as it was, and he was so distraught he cried during one sorrowful song. Felicia was enchanted with every new place we found and would read to me descriptions from her diary or show her drawings of the bars and people.

One night in the Seven Seas she talked about her plans to paint a huge bar scene of revelers and debauches, like something by Brueghel, and to fill it with all the wild people we know. We envisioned vignettes with the Mill's huge barmaid Jackie, the dark sailors in La Marina, Tommy and Rose dancing in another frenzy of murals. I asked her what she planned for us in the painting. Felicia looked at me in surprise and said, "That's the very first time you've ever referred to us!"

I used the opportunity to say what I had carefully rehearsed—that perhaps I was falling in love with her. She stared at me in even greater surprise and laughed strangely. "I thought you fell in love with me several weeks ago! At least you act like it when you're in bed." Then she started to weep. I covered her hand on the table and assured her I really had loved her from the first. I only just now realized the reality of being in love with her. Comforted, Felicia whispered that she also loves me, and that night we explored another page of the Kamasutra.

In the season of their holidays, Felicia traveled to her family in Florida for the day of Thanksgiving and then again for the Christmas. Each time I accompanied Tommy to the home of his parents some few miles up the Mississippi River. For the first time in my life, I rode upon a horse, and I was amazed by his father's resemblance to Jawaharlal Nehru. For the nights of each visit, he and I slept together in his young sister's bed. Perhaps the renunciation itself had become a bond for us both as we lay there so close together. Otherwise, our lives together on Audubon Street flowed on as before, with Tommy's routine of classes and working at the Snack Bar. But he was less frequently now with the boy Terry and his fat girlfriend, and we often were in La Marina together with long hours to share our lives and the delights of our minds.

On the New Year's Eve in the crush of La Marina, Tommy told me he'd broken it off with Terry because his sexual organ was simply too big. This I found to be imminently laughable, but he stated quite seriously that the best sodomy being reciprocal, Terry had been unfulfilling "in a certain rather fundamental way." So to offer him some kind of fulfillment at the special midnight hour, the anniversary occasion of throwing my friend's life into confusion, I wished Tommy a Happy 1963 and kissed him on his mouth again, right there amongst the surging crowds in the Second Room. Then I said goodnight and left through the door onto Toulouse Street.

Halfway up the block, simply lying there on the sidewalk, I came upon a twenty-dollar bill. Taking advantage of this holiday windfall, I took a cab back to Audubon and crawled into Tommy's narrow bed, which is almost hard enough. (Joel being away, Tommy would sleep in the bigger bed.) Much later he returned, entering very quietly with a man, and turned on Joel's dim reading lamp. Pretending still to be asleep, I watched them undress and embrace. To my

close view from the foot of that bed, every detail of their intercourse was visible. In spite of the spectacle and sounds of their perverse copulation, I succeeded in once more going to sleep.

In the Happy New Year's morning light with coffee, the man in the night proved to be a handsome fellow I had often seen on campus, a Peruvian graduate student in Biology named Pedro. Obviously overwhelmed by what had happened in the night, he remarked several times how terribly drunk he had been when Tommy helped him back here in the cab. Over his coffee cup Tommy gave me a knowing smile. When Pedro left for his dorm, my friend refilled our cups and sighed, "How terribly sad. Pretty Pedrocito's probably not even two blocks away now, and already I bet he's repressed all memory of getting fucked. And I also bet I don't have a snowball's chance in holy hell of ever getting into his sweet pants again. Quoth the old Raven, 'Nevermore.' I guess one simply has to get used to just a poke in the dark." I said I definitely would never forget last night's show. Tommy grinned wickedly and said, "I hope not!"

The scene I witnessed added yet another exciting element to my relations with Felicia. On the night she returned from her visit to Florida, she greatly enjoyed it. Indeed, the next morning over our breakfast she asked me to live with her in an apartment she'd found on fancy Audubon Place. The flat was an upstairs rear over the garage of an enormous Victorian house with tall palm trees, several social notches up from mere Audubon Street. Naturally, I was very pleased to move in with her, yet another step closer to marriage with her.

Helping me take my things the three blocks over to Felicia's, Tommy said little, clearly upset at my leaving him. But there was no jealousy or anger in his brown eyes—only grief and resignation. I assured him we will always have each other no matter where I am living. Tommy responded, "Yes, Raj, you and I are now and ever shall be, world without end, amen." I tried to thank him for all his kindness to me over the past months, but he stopped me, saying, "Don't worry about it, my love. You'll do the same for me in our next lives. And I expect to be lavishly kept!" As he admired the new flat, Tommy was warm with Felicia, and then with more happy congratulations, he left for his work.

Alone, she and I made love on the floor of the kitchen.

###

3.3 - CHULA!

Fortunately Emanuel learned his English very good from the school in Guatemala City. He came into the United States through El Paso into Texas State. On the long ride on the autobus from Texas to New Orleans, the cities and towns were interesting, but not so big like the City of Mexico, where Emanuel was for one week in his travel. The letter from his cousin in New Orleans decided him to go to there, since he could not stay with his family in Guatemala longer, not with this way that he is, and the scandal when they discovered about him. Cousin Armando wrote that New Orleans was a good city to earn much money for easy.

Armando, an even more little man than Emanuel, who was himself so small like a boy, met him at the station of the Greyhound bus, and they rode in his blue new Ford automobile around the old part of the city. The houses were very beautiful with so many big *balcones* of iron. The apartment of Armando on the street Constantinople was a room up the stairs in an old big house. He said he will find some work for Emanuel where the boss will not ask to see papers. Cousin Armando was this way a waiter in a very good restaurant and earned *mucho* money every day. Then he said to Emanuel about his problem at home with the family, and *no es problema* because he was *maricón también*.

In the night time Armando showed Emanuel to the gay bars in the French Quarter. The big place called Dixie's Bar of Music was very much quiet, and also on the Calle de Borbon was a bar Lafitte's in Exile, where it was too dark to see peoples. These places were not pleasing to Emanuel. Not like the wonderful bar in the City of Mexico near Chapultepec Park! Emanuel met nobody that night because he did not trust his English speaking yet.

Like his promises, in two days only Armando made for Emanuel to work as a masseur at the Canal Street Baths. He said that Emanuel will learn quickly to make massage. "All you do is to rub the mans' backs. You can earn maybe ten dollars each hour!" Armando added also that the customers maybe will ask him to do something besides rub them, but Emanuel was not afraid of that if they will give to him a big tip. At the Baths that night, he met a very tall Mr. Webster who explained how to write down tickets for the cashier for every customers. A handsome brown-haired boy named Leroy showed him the how to work a massage.

Leroy's customer, a fat-belly man with big white eyebrows, was happy for being a class. Leroy showed Emanuel each thing to rub on the man's back and legs, and the customer guy said to him many encouragements. Working on that big body on the table like a strange white thing, *especialmente* when they rubbed the man's shriveled butt, like hard tortilla dough, Emanuel felt like sick. After the lesson the customer gave him one dollar for tip for learning.

So this was how easy Emanuel became a masseur. He was not surprised when soon one man asked for the "extra" massage, and the tips of ten dollars made quickly a lot of money. For his shiny black hair and big dark Mayan eyes, the men called little Emanuel handsome, and he was after one week only the favorite with business men in the daytimes.

After the work for many days, usually very much tired, he stayed always at home in Armando's apartment and did nothing, *nada*. In some evenings he walked around in the neighborhood called the Garden District with many big rich houses and old trees. One night on the Lowerline Street, he met a man, and they went back to the apartment, but it was no funs because the man was so fat. On one weekend, Emanuel decided he will go to one of the gay bars again in the French Quarter. For two nights in Dixie's almost no peoples talked to him, and one big man called him "damned Mexican." One old queen, who was nice to him, asked if Emanuel ever goes to a Spanish bar called La Casa de los Marineros. She said him also good directions to the Toulouse and Decatur Streets.

The bar was very much loud, dirty, and dark, but Emanuel was happy to hear Spanish music again and to see the many kinds of Latin peoples in the crowd. In the middle of a beautiful loud cumbia dance record called "Mar Adentro," a young gringo with blond hair walked to him from out the dark crowd and said hello. *Chula!* (In Emanuel's country, that word means 'very much sexy.') His eyes were brown, and he moved his hips in a *mucho* sexy step to the music. He was name Tommy, a student in the university called Tulane. Emanuel liked how Tommy looks at him with smiling eyes. While they talked, they walked around in the three rooms of the big bar, and this Tommy often stopped to dance with some girl. Emanuel was amaze because Tommy danced so good the merengue. In the loco third room, where are crazy paintings on the walls, Tommy asked Emanuel to come home with him.

Tommy stopped in the second room for saying goodnight to a beautiful India-man. The pretty bargirl gave him a green bag of canvas from behind the bar. The bag was full of his books and school things. Outside on the corner, a truck of the police drove past with peoples in its back shouting to Tommy. He an after them shouting also, and Emanuel followed, but at the corner of Jackson Square, the truck was gone already away. Tommy said for Emanuel that the peoples in the truck were his friends, the whores and sailors from a Greek bar down the street. If he did not meet Emanuel tonight, he will be on that truck also. When they walked on Royal Street for the streetcar, Tommy said the India-man will come back to his house later.

They left from the trolley car at Audubon Street and walked three long empty blocks. On the path of bushes to his door, Tommy stopped Emanuel for to kiss, and on the way to his bed their clothes fell in piles on the floor. Emanuel was a little person but large down there, and Tommy was surprise. They played for long times with each others, and Tommy asked please to fuck Emanuel, but he will never let anyone in there. *Nunca!* So they did good blowjobs. They were finished and almost sleeping when the India-man came inside and laid on the other bed like not seeing the naked boys.

In morning Raj waked up while they put on clothes and said to them hellos. Tommy walked with Emanuel up the Audubon Street to the trolley, and on the way he said about his working at the Canal Street Baths. While they waited on the Avenue, Tommy said he wants to see Emanuel again and get his good massage.

When Emanuel is at the work again, the boss made him to work on the second shift in the two next weeks. That was until two in the morning, and Mr. Watson said he will be *mucho* more busy. The customers were more different from those ones in the daytimes, often *mucho* more handsome, and gave him good tips. Some were very funs, and he did not think about that student boy Tommy. Late at nights in Armando's apartment, he was again *muy cansado*, and in the daytimes he rode around the city on the autobuses for see the strange gringos and black peoples. Emanuel finded also Spanish movie houses with early shows of old romantic films he loves.

So it was one week after the New Year, 1963, when Emanuel went back into the French Quarter to go to the Lafitte's. He walked along the Calle de Borbon and saw the India-man in the door of Bourbon House restaurant. He waved to Emanuel, so he stopped for talking. Raj was *muy hermoso, verdad!* and Emanuel thinked for a *momentito* to go maybe to bed with him.

"I want to talk with you," he says, "so I'm glad you came along." Emanuel asks what he wants. "Tommy keeps looking for you in La Marina, hoping you'll come back again." Emanuel felt sad for that. Raj said also, "If you see him again, please be gentle. Tommy is a very special person for me, and he hasn't found the tenderness he deserves." Emanuel asked why he does not take Tommy to bed. The answer of Raj was, "Because I do not want to be a homosexualist."

Emanuel walked away up the Calle de Borbon thinking about the Lafitte's bar. Why he wants to go to there? The talk with Raj remembered him of that one sexy night with Tommy—*chula!*—and his steps turned down the St. Peter Street to La Marina. For almost two hours he standed and sat at different places in the three bars and drank five beers. So Emanuel was some drunk when Tommy came and finded him in the first room on a stool under a Falstaff beer sign. Tommy said he was tired from dancing at the Greek bar but looked very happy. They bought beers and talked into their ears. He agreed to go again to Tommy's place, but his other roommate Joel was at home. Tommy said to him that Raj now lived with his girlfriend Felicia. Joel in his big bed waked up and said to them hellos. Once more time to sleep in Tommy's narrow bed, but they could only to kiss—until Joel sleeps again, then *chula!*

The next day was the Wednesday, Emanuel's day off before to work the day shift again, and he looked for an apartment. A short way out the Esplanade Avenue from the French Quarter, he finded one room with *baño* on the third floor of a tower of a big old green house, and there was terraza outside on the roof. The rent costed only fifty dollars, which he could make in one days of tips. One taxi ride moved his things out from Armando's apartment, and then the autobus taked him to see Tommy in his cafeteria and eat some food.

The University Center was a pretty and new building, and the student boys walking around, *chula!* Emanuel standed in line with his tray and waited for Tommy to look up from the cash machine. He was *mucho* surprise. When he counted change, Tommy hoped Emanuel to come to La Marina tonight. So Emanuel ate his sandwich at a table near and watched Tommy's back, feeling gentle for this handsome boy. His surprise for Tommy, the new apartment where they will make love to go crazy. After his food, Emanuel went up behind Tommy to say he has a good secret for him tonight. New customers came, and Tommy said him bye.

Next for Emanuel was buying towels and things for his kitchen at the purple and white Katz & Besthof drugstore on the St. Charles Avenue, to go by the restaurant for telling Armando he was moved out, and to prepare the apartment for the night with Tommy there. He washed the sink with cleanser and thinked about when he had once a lover in Guatemala City, for two months only. In others times there and his travels, Emanuel was always alone, never to sleep with anyone more than one times. But tonight will be third night with a gringo boy of college.

After the work and a hot bath, he waited in La Marina bar. Emanuel was asking a beer in the first room when Tommy came in, dropped his book bag behind bar, and hugged him. "Drink up! We've got a party to go to!" Since he wanted also a beer, they went to the third room, and *naturalmente* Tommy finded soon a girl to dance a too sexy *cumbia*. Then they went to a house on the Carondelet Street where the party of a Filipino girl Donna was. Inside the hallway a boy and a *mucho gorda* girl hugged on the floor, and Tommy said, "Hi, Shari. Hi, Carl."

Upstairs were so many peoples, most students, but the room was divide clear between straights and the *maricónes*. Tommy introduced Emanuel to his friends, a square-face boy named Rafael—Raf—a thin and pretty boy Flin, and two little girls, one Lia with big blue eyes that look surprise, and Beth, who is like Shirley Temple with many curly hairs. Everyones were dancing to the loud rock and roll music, but Tommy and Emanuel sat on the sofa on the *maricón* side of the room. Tommy had a bottle of white wine in his book bag, and they drank and kissed many times. So happy, Emanuel forgetted to tell to Tommy about the new apartment.

When Flin and Lia stopped to dance, they ran into the *baño* and locked the door. Many noise and laughs came out from the room, and when Donna knocked to ask what is going on, they answered nothing. When the door opened, they came outside in the clothes of each other's,

Lia in the blue turtle's neck shirt and pants of Flin and Flin in the green skirt and pretty yellow blouse of Lia. Everyones laughed so loud.

Some times later Donna came to them and said to Tommy, "My landlady just called the cops. Let's get out of here!" He asked, "Are you just going to abandon your guests to the cops?" She said, "Sure, they're the ones making the noise!" This was when Emanuel started to liking the Filipino girl. Seven of them ran down the stairs to Donna's Chevrolet car.

Back in La Casa de los Marinos, along the painting wall, Emanuel remembered to say to Tommy about the new apartment, and he was so happy for the good news. He promised they will go there after just a few dances more with Donna. Emanuel danced also, once time with Lia and more times with Beth, who was his own size, and felt so happy to be with this boy so *chula* in the *merengue*. Emanuel felt suddenly so much in love like never before!

Outside the bar, they stopped a taxi on Toulouse Street, and Emanuel said to the driver the new Esplanade address. Tommy was surprise by the big house with the towers, and climbing up the stairs, he pinched Emanuel's butt. In the new bed between the kisses, Emanuel taught Tommy to say in Spanish "*Te amo*" and "*hermoso*." And he called Tommy "*Tamale*" because he wants to eat him! Even so he was too much in love with this college boy, he still will not let Tommy to fuck him. (When Emanuel was fourteen years only, his big brother Reynaldo always was to beat him up, and when the little boy can to do nothing, Reynaldo fucked him.)

Instead, Emanuel gave his *hermoso* a special massage and a blowjob worth a big tip of twenty dollar. Then, because Tamale begged him so much, he screwed him with the big thing, and the *chula* boy liked it so much. After the fucking, Tommy went naked out on the roof *terrazza* in the moon's light. He moved his arms up and down and stepped his feet in a slow dance. He said it was a Greek dance because he was so happy.

So this was when began their happy time. Every nights almost for many weeks they met at La Marina after Tommy's work. Beth and Lia came also there often, many times with Raf, a thin boy with a crazy look in his face, and they liked very much to dance with the boys for hours. Once time Tommy walked with Emanuel down the street to that Greek bar, the Gin Mill, but it was not much pleasing. The sailors were not too much handsome. Tommy agreed soon to go, and on the way back to La Marina he said the Gin Mill was not good for boys like Emanuel who doesn't like to get fucked. So Emanuel knew his Tamale was thinking still about it.

In the Esplanade apartment when they made love, Tamale was very teasing with little Emanuel, biting his nipples and pinching his butt. Emanuel liked it much. In the early morning his *hermoso* walked up the street to stand at the corner and wait for the autobus back to his school. Emanuel could see him from the *terrazza*, and they waved *adiós* to each others.

It was strange to him, *mucho* exciting and sweet, how his *corazón* was crazy with love for this gringo boy. Every days at work in the Baths, Emanuel only waited to kiss again the mouth of Tommy, and he so was especial good with extra massage for customers. When he made love with his Tamale in the nights, he was in heaven. Tommy carried always him to the bed and called him magic *muchacho*.

So much *grande* was the love of Emanuel that he was not jealous that night when they went to the *orgía* at the apartment of Flin on the St. Charles Avenue. Everyones were naked. Emanuel and Tommy stayed together on the sofa, but other hands touched on their bodies. In the light from the one candle, a thin naked Chinese boy danced very pretty over and around the naked bodies. The Chinese danced up to Tommy and moved his ass like to tease by his face. Tommy tried to pull him down on the sofa with them, but he danced away. While they kissed again some others guys sucked their cocks very good, but Emanuel was not jealous.

Later three nights in bed, for making funny of the dance of the Chinese boy, Emanuel danced for his Tamale naked and shook his ass so sexy. Tommy grabbed him and said, "By God, you're going to get fucked tonight!" Emanuel fought and ran away, but Tommy caught him on the *terraza*. Even so Emanuel hitted and shouted no, Tommy dragged him onto the bed.

Emanuel started to crying, and Tommy let him to go. He rolled over with his cock up in the air and rubbed Vaseline on it, put his arms up around his golden hair, smiling too sexy, and said, "You choose, *muchacho*. By the time I count to three, either you get up here and sit on this dick or I'm gone! *Voy a ir!*" Emanuel cried and begged no, no. "One! Come on now, *querido*," Tommy urged with his finger. "Not even as big as yours. Two!"

Emanuel choosed the only thing. So afraid and still crying, he moved his hips around like to dance, and there was not even hurt when Tamale went into his ass. This way he learned soon how to make his *hermoso* happy. Emanuel did not remember more the times he swore *nunca*, *nunca*! Now they fucked each others when Tommy wanted—every nights before they go to dance in La Marina and in many mornings before he goes back to the school.

The Friday before the Carneval, the Mardi Gras, Tommy went with his mother to the ball of the Krewe of Hermes, and he came late in La Marina bar, soon after midnight. In his tuxedo Emanuel's Tamale looked like a handsome man in a fashion magazine. Everyones in La Marina looked at him, the *hermoso* of Emanuel. Lucita stopped him to dance with her the *pasa doble*—*muy elegante*—and then he and Emanuel drank one beer at the bar in the Third Room.

After the beer, Tommy said to go from the bar to talk, and they walked on the Decatur Street slowly toward the Jackson Square. In the walk, a little and little, Tommy said to Emanuel that he was so unhappy. Emanuel was shock feeling so much in love and thinked his Tamale was also with him. Tommy said that he loves Emanuel, but ever since Raj moved to Felicia, he was very, very unhappy. They sat on the steps at the gate on St. Peter Street, and Emanuel comforted his *hermoso*. Tommy started to crying, and Emanuel rubbed off the cheek his tears.

Then Tommy talked that he and Emanuel lived in two different worlds, and Emanuel was afraid from his words. He said also that they should not love each other anymore. Emanuel did not understand how his *hermoso* says this, and he also cried. Tommy touched the cheek of Emanuel and said they are just too different. Emanuel cried too hardly to hear his other words. When they walked back to La Marina, the *hermoso* beside him no more was Emanuel's.

Back in the dark bar, Emanuel sat in the third room very hurted and watched Tommy do the dance. He drank also many *cubas libres*. Tommy was so *hermoso* in the tuxedo and looked so happy in the *merengues*, so happy to break up with Emanuel. He felt *mucho* angry with Tommy for making him this terrible pain. He for so long lets Tommy to fuck him, and now he does not want his *muchacho* more.

Emanuel was so angry that he went over to Tommy and said to him, "I leave La Marina now forever and will not come back again in here. I go to the Gin Mill and be whore like you think about me." Tommy said he never meant anything like that and started to crying also, but Emanuel was too *mucho boracho* and *doloroso*. He difficultly walked on the Decatur Street and many times looked backwards if Tommy came. But no, and Emanuel was more angry still.

In the Gin Mill was many Greek sailors. Emanuel talked to one man with a big black *bigote*, who was nice to buy him more drinks. In a taxi to go to the Esplanade, Emanuel was so drunk that the man must helped him up the steps. In the bed the Greek sailor pulled off his pants, but Emanuel passed out and knew nothings what happened.

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3.4 - SILKEN PIRATES

(Epistle 3/8/63)

Dear Sally,

My goodness, it's Friday and already a couple of weeks since I wrote last. So sorry to have delayed in reporting all the latest news in this mad whirl of my life. Much to report, so get set. Again, I really hope you don't mind the way I run on and on with my ridiculous romances all the time. This may be a long one to make amends. Seems I last wrote about being a frivolous faerie fucking my *chula* Emanuel? And about his lovely little Esplanade apartment?

Right after that, in spite of how sweet it all was, I got to feeling funny about the affair with him. Riding the bus back to school all those mornings, I'd feel somehow angry or sad. And once when we were in La Marina, Raj intimated that my sweet little *muchacho* was shallow. Then when I really listened to Emanuel talk, I was amazed at the trivial and silly content of his thoughts. If ever I tried to talk about something about me, about what I'm doing at school, or thinking about philosophically, he'd change the subject right away to something about his own incredibly mundane experiences of the day. So without all that much to talk about, we simply caroused in La Marina with the gang, and went home to bed for furious fornication.

By the end of the week when I was at the Hermes Ball with Mother—our annual ritual on tickets from her boss—while watching the frivolous glittery pageantry and feeling like someone from another planet, I decided I didn't want to go on spending every night on Esplanade with Emanuel. I just couldn't. I wanted to continue looking for someone, a real lover like Pete or Raj who can talk with me, who can enchant me with his being, and be as enchanted by mine. Then if we could make love as well, wouldn't everything be just peachy perfect?

After the ball I went to La Marina and took Emanuel for a walk to the St. Peter gate of the square. And I told him I wanted to break up with him. Of course he cried a lot, and it was terribly painful, as was the rest of the evening dancing in La Marina. Emanuel got really drunk and angry. He said he'd go work the sailors in the Gin Mill like the rest of the whores. When he was gone, I sat by the roaring juke box in the Third Circle and cried for his pain.

But the madhouse of Mardi Gras was getting into full swing. There were several parties around the Quarter over the weekend, and I enjoyed the freedom, on the prowl again. One party was on the top floor of a big house on Orleans Street at the corner of Dauphine. It used to belong to a Sultan of somewhere, and he kept his harem there—one of the most elegant in town with balconies you wouldn't believe. The top floor view out toward the cathedral is very rich. And I've never been to anything as lavish as that party. Silver trays of delicious things to eat, antiques everywhere, Persian carpets, and many pretty drunken youths doing naughty things. Not one to pass up a good thing, I did some naughty things myself with some exposed genitalia.

Another spectacular party was held secretly in the half-ruins of an old vacant hospital on Ursulines and Royal. It could have been the castle in "La Dolce Vita." Crumbling walls with trees growing out of them, a maze of ruinous rooms. It was there I saw that intriguing Chinese boy again, dancing again, but this time in a gauzy costume, in the dark hallways and out on the rooftop. I found out his name is Liu, and he's also a painter on the square. He didn't pay me any attention, so I went over to La Marina to dance myself crazy in the mob till about five in the morning. Donna, Leah, Beth, and I wore ourselves out.

All told from Hermes Friday to Fat Tuesday I think I only slept a couple hours a night (half my normal four). There were all the parades during the day to keep one up. Most of the parade stuff I did with Felicia and Raj, and naturally I had to fight down occasional fits of sadness that he can't be mine. These months since he moved in with her in that new apartment,

even though it's so close, my life has felt so empty. I sit often (like now in the Music Room of the UC listening to Orff's "Carmina Burana") and sadly remember our times last fall when Raj and I lived together, when we shared everything (except passion). There's no way I can compete with Felicia, of course, since he wants a woman, but the unfairness of it makes me rather mad—and I don't mean angry.

Anyhow, for Mardi Gras Day Felicia arranged for us to ride on a float of some group that's part of the Rex parade. I was so excited about being in a parade that I barely managed to sleep from about six-thirty to eight, cleaned up, and stumbled through the bright warm morning to Audubon Place. Felicia let me in and offered coffee and pastries, which was most welcome. Raj was still lying in his sheets on the living room floor by the wall. (I take a certain comfort in that he doesn't really sleep with her either.) The coffee and pastries got him moving too, and we spent a good while preparing our masques (that's N'Orlins for costumes).

Supposed to be pirates on a big ship, we wore Raj's big baggy white silk shirts with red bandanas and three-cornered hats and high top boots Felicia found in the Theatre Department costume closet. She looked super in her masque, like a movie heroine, a lacey damsel captured by bloodthirsty buccaneers. Our plastic prop swords on the belt were awkward, but necessary for the image, I guess, and actually quite fun to brandish occasionally and cry "Avast!" and such piratical noises. Raj wore one of Felicia's big clip-on ear-rings, and I the other. With his eye patch, he looked one hell of a lot more beautiful than any Errol Flynn.

We gathered for the parade on upper Claiborne and had to spend longer than I would have liked simply hanging about the rigging of the ship-float. But there were several kegs of cold beer on the poop deck (The portapotty was appropriately there.), which I found particularly refreshing on a morning after several nights before. By the time we started to sail off down the street, which felt more like riding a wagon than a boat, any number of us motley pirates were somewhat lubricated. They passed out big bundles of Czech glass beads for us to throw, and boxes of doubloons with the head of Rex, King of Carnival, the Monarch of Merriment.

Claiborne up there was basically empty, but as we got closer to downtown there were clumps of people waving and shouting at us. It was tempting to throw gobs of stuff at them, but we were warned that we had to make our throws last—just toss a little at a time. The railing of the ship-float had eight gunwales with fake cannons where we stood and waved and threw, and since there were nearly fifteen of us pirates aboard, we had substantial break time to hang around the kegs. In my shifts at the rail, I looked for the pretty boys and threw beads to them, but once, I have to admit, I threw a whistle at a woman's open mouth. I never saw what happened.

Among the incredible masses of people jamming Canal Street the experience became totally other-worldly—riding on the ship sailing high through seas of shouting, waving people, bestowing golden coins and jewels on those we favored. (Considerably higher style than simply throwing out five-dollar bills from a balcony, no?) The blocks down Canal were slow and utterly magnificent, and it was really, really hard to conserve the throws so there'd be enough for the turn down Royal. It being mid-day by then, the heat was on the rise, and we all relied even more heavily on the cornucopian kegs. Fairly early on Felicia got sit-down drunk and propped up by the rail of the poop deck. I went over to see if she was okay and offer her a hamburger from the galley, thinking maybe it would help. She took it from me, unwrapped it, and disgustingly pitched it overboard, saying, "For the sharks!" I wish I'd seen the surprised parade-goer who caught that doubloon. I laughed so hard I couldn't do anything for many minutes, convulsions of merriment which I'm sure did great honor to Rex.

Back on conviviality duty at a gunwale again, I stood with Raj waving, throwing. In one rather swash-buckling moment with my arm round his shoulder, I saw Rose standing in the crowd near the corner of Baronne with my chemist friend Ben still close by her side. I waved wildly and threw them some of the prettiest beads I had left. I think Rose caught them, but I wasn't sure if she recognized Raj and me.

That brief while with Raj at the rail as our ship sailed down Canal Street and turned grandly onto Royal has to be one of the happiest moments of my life—to date. Everywhere an ocean of shouting faces, and he and I, silken pirates, riding their waves, throwing our treasures into their deeps. Raj even hugged me a couple times and didn't let go when I rested against him. As our fine ship lumbered down the narrow street, the balconies on either side loomed right out at us on the deck with masquers there who actually threw beads at us!

At Toulouse Street I finally ran out of throws and suggested we abandon ship to avoid the maelstrom at the corner of St. Peter. Felicia was crying by the beer keg, and we helped her out through a gunwale to jump ship and drop into the crowd, instantly to be swallowed up by that dark sea of carnival. She sobered up a bit as we fought our way down Toulouse, likely because it was already late afternoon and getting pretty cool.

A bite to eat in Fong got us into shape to dive into La Marina next door, and the crowd in there was so stupendous, it was all but impossible to move. Raj and Felicia decided to leave fairly soon, but I worked my way slowly into the inner sanctum. (There is definitely an art to moving through densely packed crowds, something about slithering into any tiny available spaces as you weave in the general direction you want to go.) I finally managed to finagle a stool under the motorcycle rider and danced on top of it for a few hours. I even had a beer supply line to the bar whenever I could catch Rita's eye in her mad work back there. And I couldn't help thinking how it was already a year now since Lalo on the juke box... Later in the evening though, I finally had to sit down and soon started to fall off my stool in exhaustion.

My good old friend Raph helped me out of La Marina, and feeling ashamed for crashing out at only ten on Mardi Gras, I slowly staggered down to Canal and the streetcar. The rattling and jerking kept me awake but not aware—I accidentally pulled the stop-cord a block too early and for appearances had to get off by the park entrance instead of at Audubon Street. To minimize the walk between there and my bed, I cut across the corner of the park.

In the gentle dark of the trees I suddenly got to feeling hideously depressed and sat down by a bush to rest and cry—about how Raj will never be mine. The woe was overwhelming, the despair for his love, all the feelings I never let myself feel before but knew were there. I wept under the bush for at least an hour and cried myself to sleep right there on the ground. Before daylight, when I awoke feeling rather chilled in the silk, I peed on that same bush and made my way home to sleep till nearly three o'clock on Ash Wednesday afternoon.

It was another gorgeous warm afternoon, and I didn't have even the slightest hangover. As a matter of fact the good cry the night before had left me feeling somehow new and alive as I wandered over to Audubon Place to see how my friends were doing in the aftermath. Felicia wasn't there, and Raj was still lying on the living room floor, but he was reading. I made him some tea and asked why he looked so gloomy. He answered, "I asked Felicia to marry me." Instantly I knew what his gloom meant—she'd said no. I felt so sorry for him I put my arm around him and rested my cheek against his. He took a couple more sips of his tea and said, "She said only if we marry in a traditional ceremony back in India with my family."

"So?" I wondered.

"That could never happen," Raj sighed. "Only if we were to marry here, the family would accept it perhaps. But Felicia will not..." He turned to me and stroked my cheek, the first caress he'd ever given me. "I'm going to New York," he announced. I was speechless. "In fifteen days or so. They can catch me there and send me home to India."

In shock, I started to cry again, and Raj said he was sorry but so grateful for my love—and I should know that if he'd ever to make love with a boy, it would be with me. Since I kept on crying, he may have gotten disgusted with me and left to take his book back to the library. Which is wherefore it's taken me these couple days to pull it together enough to write.

In spite of the horror of Raj leaving me once again, I still feel exhilarated to be free now that it's over with Emanuel. Yet this beautiful spring just starting will be so lonely I could die. Was I crazy to break off with my *muchacho* just because he and I are so different? Last night I went to the Gin Mill, and he was there. It made me very sad to find him flirting outrageously with the sailors, acting so happy. I could tell he wasn't. But Sally, I won't let myself feel guilty about it. Like when he chose to let me fuck him, what Emanuel does now is his own choice.

Oh, well, that's about all the time I've got. Work in the cafeteria in a few minutes. Write me as soon as you can because I really need your advice and company.

Always, Tommy

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