ALL THAT IS

'A beautiful novel, with sufficient love, heartbreak, vengeance, identity confusion, longing, and euphoria of language to have satisfied Shakespeare.' JOHN IRVING

JAMES SALTER

I

BREAK OF DAY

All night in darkness the water sped past.

In tier on tier of iron bunks below deck, silent, six deep, lay hundreds of men, many faceup with their eyes still open though it was near morning. The lights were dimmed, the engines throbbing endlessly, the ventilators pulling in damp air, fifteen hundred men with their packs and weapons heavy enough to take them straight to the bottom, like an anvil dropped in the sea, part of a vast army sailing towards Okinawa, the great island that was just to the south of Japan. In truth, Okinawa *was* Japan, part of the homeland, strange and unknown. The war that had been going on for three and a half years was in its final act. In half an hour the first groups of men would file in for breakfast, standing as they ate, shoulder to shoulder, solemn, unspeaking. The ship was moving smoothly with faint sound. The steel of the hull creaked.

The war in the Pacific was not like the rest of it. The distances alone were enormous. There was nothing but days on end of empty sea and strange names of places, a thousand miles between them. It had been a war of many islands, of prying them from the Japanese, one by one. Guadalcanal, which became a legend. The Solomons and the Slot. Tarawa, where the landing craft ran aground on reefs far from shore and the men were slaughtered in enemy fire dense as bees, the horror of the

beaches, swollen bodies lolling in the surf, the nation's sons, some of them beautiful.

In the beginning with frightening speed the Japanese had overrun everything, all of the Dutch East Indies, Malaya, the Philippines. Great strongholds, deep fortifications known to be impregnable, were swept over in a matter of days. There had been only one counter stroke, the first great carrier battle in the middle of the Pacific, near Midway, where four irreplaceable Japanese carriers went down with all their planes and veteran crews. A staggering blow, but still the Japanese were relentless. Their grip on the Pacific would have to be broken finger by iron finger.

The battles were endless and unpitying, in dense jungle and heat. Near the shore, afterwards, the palms stood naked, like tall stakes, every leaf shot away. The enemy were savage fighters, the strange pagoda-like structures on their warships, their secret hissing language, their stockiness and ferocity. They did not surrender. They fought to the death. They executed prisoners with razor swords, two-handed swords raised high overhead, and they were merciless in victory, arms thrust aloft in mass triumph.

By 1944, the great, final stages had begun. Their object was to bring the Japanese homeland within range of heavy bombers. Saipan was the key. It was large and heavily defended. The Japanese army had not been defeated in battle, disregarding the outposts—New Guinea, the Gilberts, places such as that—for more than 350 years. There were twenty-five thousand Japanese troops on the island of Saipan commanded to yield nothing, not an inch of ground. In the order of earthly things, the defense of Saipan was deemed a matter of life and death.

In June, the invasion began. The Japanese had dangerous naval forces in the area, heavy cruisers and battleships. Two marine divisions went ashore and an army division followed.

It became, for the Japanese, the Saipan disaster. Twenty days later, nearly all of them had perished. The Japanese general and also Admiral Nagumo, who had commanded at Midway, committed suicide, and hundreds of civilians, men and women terrified of being slaughtered, some of them mothers holding babies in their arms, leapt from the steep cliffs to their death on the sharp rocks below.

It was the knell. The bombing of the main islands of Japan was now

possible, and in the most massive of the raids, a firebombing of Tokyo, more than eighty thousand people died in the huge inferno in a single night.

Next, Iwo Jima fell. The Japanese pronounced an ultimate pledge: the death of a hundred million, the entire population, rather than surrender.

In the path of it lay Okinawa.

Day was rising, a pale Pacific dawn that had no real horizon with the tops of the early clouds gathering light. The sea was empty. Slowly the sun appeared, flooding across the water and turning it white. A lieutenant jg named Bowman had come on deck and was standing at the railing, looking out. His cabinmate, Kimmel, silently joined him. It was a day Bowman would never forget. Neither would any of them.

"Anything out there?"

"Nothing."

"Not that you can see," Kimmel said.

He looked forward, then aft.

"It's too peaceful," he said.

Bowman was navigation officer and also, he had learned just two days earlier, lookout officer.

"Sir," he had asked, "what does that entail?"

"Here's the manual," the exec said. "Read it."

He began that night, turning down the corner of certain pages as he read.

"What are you doing?" Kimmel asked.

"Don't bother me right now."

"What are you studying?"

"A manual."

"Jesus, we're in the middle of enemy waters and you're sitting there reading a manual? This is no time for that. You're supposed to already know what to do."

Bowman ignored him. They had been together from the beginning, since midshipman's school, where the commandant, a navy captain whose career had collapsed when his destroyer ran aground, had a copy of *A Message to Garcia,* an inspirational text from the Spanish-American

War, placed on every man's bunk. Captain McCreary had no future but he remained loyal to the standards of the past. He drank himself into a stupor every night but was always crisp and well-shaved in the morning. He knew the book of navy regulations by heart and had bought the copies of *A Message to Garcia* with money from his own pocket. Bowman had read the *Message* carefully, years later he could still recite parts of it. *Garcia was somewhere in the mountain vastness of Cuba—no one knew where . . .* The point was simple: Do your duty fully and absolutely without unnecessary questions or excuses. Kimmel had cackled as he read it.

"Aye, aye, sir. Man the guns!"

He was dark-haired and skinny and walked with a loose gait that made him seem long-legged. His uniform always looked somehow slept in. His neck was too thin for his collar. The crew, among themselves, called him the Camel, but he had a playboy's aplomb and women liked him. In San Diego he had taken up with a lively girl named Vicky whose father owned a car dealership, Palmetto Ford. She had blond hair, pulled back, and a touch of daring. She was drawn to Kimmel immediately, his indolent glamour. In the hotel room that he had gotten with two other officers and where, he explained, they would be away from the noise of the bar, they sat drinking Canadian Club and Coke.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"How did what happen?"

"My meeting someone like you."

"You certainly didn't deserve it," she said.

He laughed.

"It was fate," he said.

She sipped her drink.

"Fate. So, am I going to marry you?"

"Jesus, are we there already? I'm not old enough to get married."

"You'd probably only deceive me about ten times in the first year," she said.

"I'd never deceive you."

"Ha ha."

She knew exactly what he was like, but she would change that. She liked his laugh. He'd have to meet her father first, she commented.

"I'd love to meet your father," Kimmel answered in seeming earnestness. "Have you told him about us?"

"Do you think I'm crazy? He'd kill me."

"What do you mean? For what?"

"For getting pregnant."

"You're pregnant?" Kimmel said, alarmed.

"Who knows?"

Vicky Hollins in her silk dress, the glances clinging to her as she passed. In heels she wasn't that short. She liked to call herself by her last name. It's Hollins, she would announce on the phone.

They were shipping out, that was what made it all real or a form of real.

"Who knows if we'll get back," he said casually.

Her letters had come in the two sackfuls of mail that Bowman had brought back from Leyte. He'd been sent there by the exec to try and find the ship's mail at the Fleet Post Office—they'd had none for ten days—and he had flown back with it, triumphant, in a TBM. Kimmel read parts of her letters aloud for the benefit, especially, of Brownell, the third man in the cabin. Brownell was intense and morally pure, with a knotted jaw that had traces of acne. Kimmel liked to bait him. He sniffed at a page of the letter. Yeah, that was her perfume, he said, he'd recognize it anywhere.

"And maybe something else," he speculated. "I wonder. You think she might have rubbed it aginst her . . . Here," he said, offering it to Brownell, "tell me what you think."

"I wouldn't know," Brownell said uneasily. The knots in his jaw showed.

"Oh, sure you would, an old pussy hound like you."

"Don't try and involve me in your lechery," Brownell said.

"It's not lechery, she's writing to me because we fell in love. It's something beautiful and pure."

"How would you know?"

Brownell was reading *The Prophet*.

"*The Prophet*. What's that?" Kimmel said. "Let me see it. What does it do, tell us what's going to happen?"

Brownell didn't answer.

The letters were less exciting than a page filled with feminine handwriting would suggest. Vicky was a talker and her letters were a detailed and somewhat repetitive account of her life, which consisted in part of

going back to all the places she and Kimmel had been to, usually in the company of Susu, her closest friend, and also in the company of other young naval officers, but thinking always of Kimmel. The bartender remembered them, she said, a fabulous couple. Her closings were always a line from a popular song. *I didn't want to do it,* she wrote.

Bowman had no girlfriend, faithful or otherwise. He'd had no experience of love but was reluctant to admit it. He simply let the subject pass when women were discussed and acted as though Kimmel's dazzling affair was more or less familiar ground to him. His life was the ship and his duties aboard. He felt loyalty to it and to a tradition that he respected, and he felt a certain pride when the captain or exec called out, "Mr. Bowman!" He liked their reliance, offhanded though it might be, on him.

He was diligent. He had blue eyes and brown hair combed back. He'd been diligent in school. Miss Crowley had drawn him aside after class and told him he had the makings of a fine Latinist, but if she could see him now in his uniform and sea-tarnished insignia, she would have been very impressed. From the time he and Kimmel had joined the ship at Ulithi, he felt he had performed well.

How he would behave in action was weighing on his mind that morning as they stood looking out at the mysterious, foreign sea and then at the sky that was already becoming brighter. Courage and fear and how you would act under fire were not among the things you talked about. You hoped, when the time came, that you would be able to do as expected. He had faith, if not complete, in himself, then in the leadership, the seasoned names that guided the fleet. Once, in the distance he had seen, low and swift-moving, the camouflaged flagship, the *New Jersey,* with Halsey aboard. It was like seeing, from afar, the Emperor at Ratisbon. He felt a kind of pride, even fulfillment. It was enough.

The real danger would come from the sky, the suicide attacks, the kamikaze—the word meant "divine wind," the heaven-sent storms that had saved Japan from the invasion fleet of Kublai Khan centuries before. This was the same intervention from on high, this time by bomb-laden planes flying directly into the enemy ships, their pilots dying in the act.

The first such attack had been in the Philippines a few months earlier. A Japanese plane dove into a heavy cruiser and exploded, killing the captain and many more. From then on the attacks multiplied. The Japa-

nese would come in irregular groups, appearing suddenly. Men watched with almost hypnotic fascination and fear as they came straight down towards them through dense antiaircraft fire or swept in low, skimming the water. To defend Okinawa the Japanese had planned to launch the greatest kamikaze assault of all. The loss of ships would be so heavy that the invasion would be driven back and destroyed. It was not just a dream. The outcome of great battles could hinge on resolve.

Through the morning, though, there was nothing. The swells rose and slid past, some bursting white, spooling out and breaking backwards. There was a deck of clouds. Beneath, the sky was bright.

The first warning of enemy planes came in a call from the bridge, and Bowman was running to his cabin to get his life jacket when the alarm for General Quarters sounded, overwhelming everything else, and he passed Kimmel in a helmet that looked too big for him racing up the steel steps crying, "This is it! This is it!" The firing had started and every gun on the ship and on those nearby took it up. The sound was deafening. Swarms of antiaircraft fire were floating upwards amid dark puffs. On the bridge the captain was hitting the helmsman on the arm to get him to listen. Men were still getting to their stations. It was all happening at two speeds, the noise and desperate haste of action and also at a lesser speed, that of fate, with dark specks in the sky moving through the gunfire. They were distant and it seemed the firing could not reach them when suddenly something else began, within the din a single dark plane was coming down and like a blind insect, unerring, turning towards them, red insignia on its wings and a shining black cowling. Every gun on the ship was firing and the seconds were collapsing into one another. Then with a huge explosion and geyser of water the ship lurched sideways beneath their feet—the plane had hit them or just alongside. In the smoke and confusion no one knew.

"Man overboard!"

"Where?"

"Astern, sir!"

It was Kimmel who, thinking the magazine amidship had been hit, had jumped. The noise was still terrific, they were firing at everything. In the wake of the ship and trying to swim amid the great swells and pieces of wreckage, Kimmel was vanishing from sight. They could not stop or

turn back for him. He would have drowned but miraculously he was seen and picked up by a destroyer that was almost immediately sunk by another kamikaze and the crew rescued by a second destroyer that, barely an hour later, was razed to the waterline. Kimmel ended up in a naval hospital. He became a kind of legend. He'd jumped off his ship by mistake and in one day had seen more action than the rest of them would see in the entire war. Afterwards, Bowman lost track of him. Several times over the years he tried to locate him in Chicago but without any luck. More than thirty ships were sunk that day. It was the greatest ordeal of the fleet during the war.

Near the same place just a few days later, the death knell of the Imperial Navy was sounded. For more than forty years, ever since their astonishing victory over the Russians at Tsushima, the Japanese had been increasing their strength. An island empire required a powerful fleet, and Japanese ships were designed to be superior. Because their crews were made up of shorter men, less space was needed between decks as well as fewer comforts, and this could allow heavier armor, bigger guns, and more speed. The greatest of these ships, invincible, with steel thicker than any in existence and design more advanced, bore the poetic name of the nation itself, *Yamato*. Under orders to attack the vast invasion fleet off Okinawa, it set sail along with nine accompanying ships as escort, from a port on the Inland Sea where it had lain waiting.

It was a departure of foreboding, like the eerie silence that precedes a coming storm. Through the green water of the harbor, late in the day, long, dark, and powerful, moving slowly and gravely at first, a bow wave forming, gathering speed, almost silent, the large dock cranes passing in silhouette, the shore hidden in evening mist, leaving white swirls of foam trailing behind it, the *Yamato* headed for sea. The sounds that could be heard were muted; there was a feeling of good-bye. The captain addressed the entire crew massed on the deck. They had plentiful ammunition, lockers filled with great shells the size of coffins, but not the fuel, he told them, to return. Three thousand men and a vice admiral were aboard. They had written farewell letters home to their parents and wives and were sailing to their deaths. *Find happiness with another,* they

wrote. *Be proud of your son*. Life was precious to them. They were somber and fearful. Many prayed. It was known that the ship was to perish as an emblem of the undying will of the nation not to surrender.

As night fell they sailed past the coast of Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese main islands, where the outline of an American battleship had once been drawn on the beach for the pilots who would attack Pearl Harbor to practice bomb. The waves shattered and swept past. There was a strange spirit, almost of joy, among the crew. In the moonlight they sang and cried *banzai!* Many of them noticed there was an unusual brightness to the sea.

They were discovered at dawn while still far from any American ships. A navy patrol plane radioed urgently, in the clear, *Enemy task force headed south. At least one battleship, many destroyers . . . Speed twenty-five knots*. The wind had risen by morning. The sea was rough with low clouds and showers. Great waves were rumbling along the side of the ship. Then, as had been foreseen the first planes appeared on the radar. It was not a single formation, it was many formations, a swarm filling the sky, 250 carrier planes.

They came from out of the clouds, dive and torpedo bombers, more than a hundred at a time. The *Yamato* had been built to be invulnerable to air attack. All of its guns were firing as the first bombs hit. One of the escort destroyers suddenly heeled over, mortally stricken and, showing the dark red of its belly, sank. Through the water torpedoes streamed towards the *Yamato,* their wakes white as string. The impregnable deck had been torn open, steel more than a foot thick, men smashed or cut in two. "Don't lose heart!" the captain called. Officers had tied themselves to their station on the bridge as more bombs hit. Others missed closely, throwing up great pillars of water, walls of water that fell across the deck, solid as stone. It was not a battle, it was a ritual, the death as of a huge beast brought down by repeated blows.

An hour had passed and still the planes came, a fourth wave of them, then a fifth and sixth. The destruction was unimaginable. The steering had been hit, the ship was turning helplessly. It had begun to list, sea was sliding over the deck. *My whole life has been the gift of your love,* they had written to their mothers. The code books were sheathed in lead so they would sink with the ship, and their ink was of a kind that dissolved

in water. Near the end of the second hour, listing almost eighty degrees, with hundreds dead and more wounded, blind and ruined, the gigantic ship began to sink. Waves swept over it and men clinging to the deck were carried off by the sea in all directions. As it went under, a huge whirlpool formed around it, a fierce torrent in which men could not survive but were drawn straight down as if falling in air. And then an even worse disaster. The stores of ammunition, the great shells, tons upon tons of them slid from their racks and slammed nose first into the turret sides. From deep in the sea came an immense explosion and flash of light so intense that it was seen from as far away as Kyushu as the full magazines went. A pillar of flame a mile high rose, a biblical pillar, and the sky was filled with red-hot pieces of steel coming down like rain. As if in echo there came, from the deep, a second climactic explosion, and thick smoke came pouring up.

Some of the crew that had not been pulled down by the suction were still swimming. They were black with oil and choking in the waves. A few were singing songs.

They were the only survivors. Neither the captain nor the admiral were among them. The rest of the three thousand men were in the lifeless body of the ship that had settled to the bottom far below.

The news of the sinking of the *Yamato* spread quickly. It was the end of the war at sea.

Bowman's ship was among the many anchored in Tokyo Bay when the war ended. Afterwards it sailed down to Okinawa to pick up troops going home, but Bowman had the chance to go ashore at Yokohama and walk through part of what remained of the city. He walked through block upon empty block of nothing but foundations. The smell of scorched debris, acrid and death-filled, hung in the air. Among the only things that were not destroyed were the massive bank vaults of solid steel, although the buildings that had contained them were gone. In the gutters were bits of burnt paper, banknotes, all that remained of the Imperial dream.

2

THE GREAT CITY

"The hero!" his uncle Frank cried, stretching out his arms to hug him.

It was a welcome-home dinner.

"Not exactly a hero," Bowman said.

"Sure you are. We read all about you."

"Read about me? Where?"

"In your letters!" his uncle said.

"Frank, let me!" his aunt cried.

They had come from the Fiori, their restaurant near Fort Lee that was decorated in thin red plush and where music from *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore* was always playing until the last, softly talking couples left, the last melancholy couples and the few men still at the bar. Frank was the uncle of his childhood. He was dark with a rounded nose and thinning hair. Stocky and good-natured, he had gone to law school in Jersey City but dropped out with the idea of becoming a chef, and at the restaurant, when he was in the mood, sometimes went back into the kitchen to cook himself, though his real joy was music. He had taught himself to play the piano and would sit in happiness, drawn up close to the keyboard with his thick fingers, their backs richly haired, nimble on the keys.

The evening was all warmth and talk. His mother, Beatrice, his aunt and uncle listened to the stories of where Bowman had been—where

was San Pedro? had he eaten any Japanese food?—and drank champagne Frank had kept from before the war.

"You don't know how worried we were all the time you were out there," his aunt Dorothy—Dot they called her—told him. "We thought of you every day."

"Did you really?"

"We prayed for you," she said.

She and Frank had no children of their own, he was really like their son. Now their fears were over and the world was as it should be and also, it seemed to Bowman, very much as it had been, familiar and ordinary, the same houses, shops, streets, everything he remembered and had known since childhood, unremarkable, yet his alone. In some windows there were gold stars for sons or husbands who had been killed, but that and the many flags were almost the only evidence of all that had taken place. The very air, untroubled and unchanged, was familiar and the high school and grammar school with their sober facades. He felt in a way superior to it all and at the same time beholden.

His uniform hung in the closet and his cap was on the shelf above. He had worn them when he was Mr. Bowman, a junior officer but respected and even admired. Long after the uniform had lost its authenticity and glamour, the cap, strangely, would still have its power.

In dreams that were frequent for a long time, he was there again. They were at sea and under attack. The ship had been hit, it was listing, going to its knees like a dying horse. The passageways were flooded, he was trying to struggle through them to get on deck where there were crowds of men. The ship was nearly on its side and he was near the boilers that might explode at any minute, he had to find a safer place. He was at the railing, he would have to jump and get back on board further astern. In the dream he jumped, but the ship was traveling too fast. It passed as he swam, the stern rumbling by, leaving him in the wake, far behind.

"Douglas," his mother said, naming a boy slightly older that Bowman had gone to school with, "asked about you."

"How is Douglas?"

"He's going to law school."

"His father was a lawyer."

"So is yours," his mother said.

"You're not worried about my future are you? I'm going back to school. I'm applying to Harvard."

"Ah, wonderful!" his uncle cried.

"Why so far away?" said his mother.

"Mother, I was off in the Pacific. You didn't complain about that being so far away."

"Oh, didn't I?"

"Well, I'm glad to be home."

His uncle put an arm around him.

"Boy, are we glad," he said.

Harvard did not accept him. It was his first choice, but his application was turned down, they did not accept transfer students, their letter informed him. In response he sat down and wrote a carefully composed reply mentioning by name the famed professors he hoped to study under, whose knowledge and authority had no equal, and at the same time portraying himself as a young man who should not be penalized for having gone off to war. Shameless as it was, the letter succeeded.

In the fall of 1946 at Harvard he was an outsider, a year or two older than his classmates but seen as having a kind of strength of character—he'd been in the war, his life was more real because of it. He was respected and also lucky in several ways, chief among them his roommate with whom he struck it off immediately. Malcolm Pearson was from a well-to-do family. He was tall, intelligent, and mumbling, only occasionally was Bowman able to make out what he was saying, but gradually he became accustomed and could hear. Pearson treated his expensive clothing with a lordly disdain and seemed rarely to go to meals. He was majoring in history with the vague idea of becoming a professor, anything to displease his father and distance himself from the building supplies business.

As it happened, after graduation he taught for a while at a boys' school in Connecticut, then went on to get a master's degree and marry a girl named Anthea Epick, although no one at the wedding at the bride's home near New London, including the minister and Bowman, who was

best man, understood him to say "I do." Anthea was also tall with dark brows and slightly knock-kneed, a thing not perceptible in her white wedding gown, but they had all been swimming in the pool the day before. She had an odd way of walking, a sort of lurch, but she shared Malcolm's tastes and they got along well.

After marriage, Malcolm did very little. Dressed like a bohemian of the 1920s in a loose overcoat, scarf, exercise pants, and an old fedora and carrying a thorn stick, he walked his collie on his place near Rhinebeck and pursued his own interests, largely confined to the history of the Middle Ages. He and Anthea had a daughter, Alix, to whom Bowman was godfather. She, too, was eccentric. She was silent as a child and later spoke with a kind of English accent. She lived at home with her parents, which they accepted as if it had always been intended, and never married. She wasn't even promiscuous, her father complained.

The years at Harvard had as lasting an effect on Bowman as the time he had spent at sea. He stood on the steps of Widener, eyes level with the trees, looking out at the great redbrick buildings and oaks of the Yard. Late in the day the deep, resounding bells began, solemn and grand, ringing on and on almost without reason and finally fading in calm, endless strokes, soft as caresses.

He had begun with the idea of studying biology, but in his second semester he happened upon, as if rising up before him from nowhere, the great Elizabethan Age—London, Shakespeare's own city still with trees, the legendary Globe, the eloquence of people of rank, sumptuous language and dress, the Thames and its dissolute south bank with land belonging to the Bishop of Winchester and the young women who made themselves available there known as Winchester geese, the end of one tumultuous century and beginning of another—all of it seized his interest.

In the class on Jacobean drama the famed professor, an actor really who had polished his performance over decades, began gorgeously in a rich voice, "Kyd was the El Greco of the English stage."

Bowman remembered it word for word.

"Against a background of clouded landscapes and fitful lightnings, we may descry these curiously angular figures clothed in garments of unexpected richness, and animated by convulsions of somber passion."

Fitful lightnings, garments of richness. The aristocrats who were writers—the Earl of Oxford, the Countess of Pembroke—the courtiers, Raleigh and Sidney. The many playwrights of whom no likenesses existed, Kyd, arrested and tortured for irregular beliefs, Webster, Dekker, the incomparable Ben Jonson, Marlowe whose *Tamburlaine* was performed when he was twenty-three, and the unknown actor whose father was a glovemaker and mother illiterate, Shakespeare himself. It was an age of fluency and towering prose. The queen, Elizabeth, knew Latin, loved music, and played the lyre. Great monarch, great city.

Bowman, too, had been born in a great city, in the French Hospital in Manhattan, in the burning heat of August and very early in the morning when all geniuses are born, as Pearson once told him. There had been an unbreathing stillness, and near dawn faint, distant thunder. It grew slowly louder, then gusts of cooler air before a tremendous storm broke with lightning and sheets of rain, and when it was over, just rising, a gigantic summer sun. Clinging to the blanket at the foot of the bed was a one-legged grasshopper that had somehow found shelter in the room. The nurse reached to pull it off but his mother, still dazed from the birth, said don't, it was an omen. The year was 1925.

His father left them two years later. He was a lawyer at Vernon, Wells and had been sent by the firm to work with a client in Baltimore, where he met a woman, a society woman named Alicia Scott and fell in love with her and left his wife and young son. Later they married and had a daughter. He married twice more, each time to successively richer women he met at country clubs. These were Bowman's stepmothers although he never met any of them or his half sister, for that matter.

He never saw his father again, but he was fortunate in having a loving uncle, Frank, who was understanding, humorous, given to writing songs and studying nudist magazines. The Fiori did well enough, and Bowman and his mother had many dinners there when he was a boy, sometimes playing casino with his uncle, who was a good player and could do card tricks, making four kings come up in the deck after the four queens and things like that.

Over the years, Beatrice Bowman acted as if her husband were merely away, as if he might come back to them, even after the divorce and his marriage to the Baltimore woman, which somehow seemed

insubstantial though she had been eager to know what the woman who had taken him away from her looked like and finally saw a photograph that was in a Baltimore newspaper. She had less curiosity about the two wives that followed, they represented only something pitiable. It was as if he were drifting further and further downward and away, and she had determined not to watch. She herself had several men who courted her, but nothing had come of it, perhaps they sensed what was equivocal in her. The two important men in her life, her father and her husband, had both abandoned her. She had her son and her job in the schools. They had little money but their own house. They were happy.

In the end Bowman decided on journalism. There was the romance of reporters like Murrow and Quentin Reynolds, at the typewriter late at night finishing their stories, the lights of the city all around, theaters emptying out, the bar at Costello's crowded and noisy. Sexual inexperience would be over with. He had not been shy at Harvard but it had simply not happened, the thing that would complete his life. He knew what the *ignudi* were but not the simply nude. He remained innocent and teeming with desire. There was Susan Hallet, the Boston girl he had gone with, slender, clear-faced, with low breasts that he associated with privilege. He had wanted her to go away for a weekend with him, to Gloucester, where there would be foghorns and the smell of the sea.

"Gloucester?"

"Any place," he said.

How could she do it, she protested, how could she explain it?

"You could say you were staying at a friend's."

"That wouldn't be true."

"Of course not. That's the whole idea."

She was looking at the ground, her arms crossed in front of her as if somehow embracing herself. She would have to say no, though she enjoyed having him persist. For him it was almost unbearable, her presence and unfeeling refusal. She might have said yes, she thought, if there were some way of doing it, going off and . . . she was able only vaguely to imagine the rest. She had felt his hardness several times when dancing. She more or less knew what all that was.

"I wouldn't know how to keep it a secret," she said.

"I'd keep it a secret," he promised. "Of course, you would know."

She smiled a little.

"I'm serious," he said. "You know how I feel about you."

He couldn't help thinking of Kimmel and the ease with which others did this.

"I'm serious, too," she said. "There's a lot more at stake for me."

"Everything is at stake."

"Not for the man."

He understood but that meant nothing. His father, who had always had success with women, might have taught him something priceless here, but nothing was ever passed between father and son.

"I wish we could do it," she said simply. "All of it, I mean. You know how much I like you."

"Yes. Sure."

"You men are all alike."

"That's a boring thing to say."

In the mood of euphoria that was everywhere after the war it was still necessary to find a place for oneself. He applied at the *Times* but there was nothing, and it was the same at the other papers. Fortunately he had a contact, a classmate's father who was in public relations and who had virtually invented the business. He could arrange anything in newspapers and magazines—for ten thousand dollars, it was said, he could put someone on the cover of *Time*. He could pick up the phone and call anyone, the secretaries immediately put him through.

Bowman was to go and see him at his house, in the morning. He always ate breakfast at nine.

"Will he expect me?"

"Yes, yes. He knows you're coming."

Having hardly slept the night before, Bowman stood on the street in front of the house at eight-thirty. It was a mild autumn morning. The house was in the Sixties, just off Central Park West. It was broad and imposing, with tall windows and the facade almost completely covered with a deep gown of ivy. At a quarter to nine he rang at the door, which was glass with heavy iron grillwork.

He was shown into a sun-filled room on the garden. Along one wall

was a long, English-style buffet with two silver trays, a crystal pitcher of orange juice, and a large silver coffee pot covered with a cloth, also butter, rolls, and jam. The butler asked how he would like his eggs. Bowman declined the eggs. He had a cup of coffee and nervously waited. He knew what Mr. Kindrigen would look like, a well-tailored man with a somewhat sinewy face and gray hair.

It was silent. There were occasional soft voices in the kitchen. He drank the coffee and went to get another cup. The garden windows were vanishing in the light.

At nine-fifteen, Kindrigen came into the room. Bowman said good morning. Kindrigen did not reply or even appear to notice him. He was in shirtsleeves, an expensive shirt with wide French cuffs. The butler brought coffee and a plate with some toast. Kindrigen stirred the coffee, opened the newspaper, and began reading it, sitting sideways to the table. Bowman had seen villains in Westerns sit this way. He said nothing and waited. Finally Kindrigen said,

"You are . . . ?"

"Philip Bowman," Bowman said. "Kevin may have mentioned me . . ."

"Are you a friend of Kevin's?"

"Yes. From school."

Kindrigen still had not looked up.

"You're from . . . ?"

"New Jersey, I live in Summit."

"What is it you want?" Kindrigen said.

"I'd like to work for the *New York Times,*" Bowman said, matching the directness.

Kindrigen glanced at him for a brief moment.

"Go home," he said.

He found a job with a small company that published a theater magazine and began by selling advertising. It was not difficult, but it was dull. The world of the theater was thriving. There were scores of theaters in the West Forties, one after another, and crowds strolled along deciding which to buy tickets to. Would you like to see a musical or this thing by Noël Coward?

Before long he heard of another job, reading manuscripts at a publishing house. The salary, it turned out, was less than he'd been making, but publishing was a different kind of business, it was a gentleman's occupation, the origin of the silence and elegance of bookstores and the freshness of new pages although this was not evident from the offices, which were off Fifth Avenue in the rear of an upper floor. It was an old building with an elevator that ascended slowly past open grillwork and hallways of worn white tile uneven from the years. In the publisher's office they were drinking champagne—one of the editors had just had a son. Robert Baum, the publisher, who owned the company together with a financing partner, was in shirtsleeves, a man of about thirty, of medium height with a friendly face, a face that was alert and somewhat homely with the beginnings of pouches beneath the eyes. He talked amiably with Bowman for a couple of minutes and, having learned enough, hired him on the spot.

"The salary is modest," he explained. "You're not married?"

"No. What is the salary?"

"One sixty," Baum said. "A hundred and sixty dollars a month. What do you think?"

"Well, less than needed, more than expected," Bowman replied.

"More than expected? I made a mistake."

Baum had confidence and charm, neither of them false. Publishing salaries were traditionally low and the salary he offered was only slightly below that. It was necessary to keep overhead low in a business that was uncertain in itself as well as being in competition with larger well-established houses. They were a literary house, Baum liked to say, but only through necessity. They were not going to turn down a best-seller as a matter of principle. The idea, he said, was to pay little and sell a truckful. On the wall of his office was a framed letter from a colleague and friend, an older editor who'd been asked to read a manuscript. The letter was on a sheet of paper that had two fold marks and was very to the point. *This is a very obvious book with shallow characters described in a style that grates on one's nerves. The love affair is tawdry and of little interest, and in fact one is repelled by it. Nothing but the completely obscene is left to the imagination. It is utterly worthless.*

"It sold two hundred thousand copies," Baum said, "and they're making a movie of it. The biggest book we've ever had. I keep it there as a reminder."

He did not add that he himself had disliked the book and had only been persuaded to publish it by his wife, who said it would touch something in people. Diana Baum was an important influence on her husband though she very seldom appeared at the offices. She devoted herself to their child, a son named Julian, and to literary criticism, writing a column for a small, liberal magazine, influential beyond its numbers, and she was a figure as a result.

Baum had money, how much was uncertain. His father, a banker who had immigrated to America, had done very well. The family was Jewish and German and felt a kind of superiority. The city was filled with Jews, many of them poor on the Lower East Side and in the boroughs, but everywhere they were in their own world somewhat excluded from the greater one. Baum had known the experience of being an outsider and more at boarding school, where, despite his open nature, he made few friends. When the war came, rather than seeking a commission, he had served in the ranks, in intelligence, as it happened, but in combat. He had one near-death experience. They were in the flatlands of Holland at night. They were sleeping in a building where the roof had been blown away. Someone came in with a flashlight and began moving among the sleeping men. He tapped one man on the arm.

"You a sergeant?" Baum heard him ask.

The man cleared his throat.

"That's right," he said.

"Get up. We're going."

"I'm a supply sergeant. I'm a replacement."

"I know. You've got to take twenty-three men up to the front."

"What twenty-three men?"

"Come on. There's no time."

He led them along a road in the dark. There was the sickening sound of firing up ahead and the heavy thump of artillery. In a slight decline a captain was giving orders.

"Who are you?" the captain asked.

"I've got twenty-three men," the sergeant replied.

In fact there were only twenty-one, two had slipped away or become lost in the darkness. There was firing going on not far away.

"Been in combat yet, sarge?"

"No, sir."

"You will tonight."

They were supposed to cross the river in rubber boats. Almost on hands and knees they dragged the boats down to the bank. Everyone was whispering but Baum felt they were making a great amount of noise.

He went in the first boat. He was not filled with fear, he was almost paralyzed by it. He held his rifle, which he had never fired, in front of him as if it were a shield. They were making a fatal transgression. He knew he was going to be killed. He could hear the low splashing of the paddles that was going to be drowned in a sudden outbreak of machine-gun fire, the whispers he knew they could hear. Paddle with your hand, someone said. The Germans were waiting to open fire until they got halfway across, but for some reason nothing happened. It was the next wave that was caught midway. Baum was on shore by then and the entire bank above his head and further back exploded into firing. Men were shouting and falling into the water. None of those boats made it.

They were pinned down for three days. He later saw the captain who had given them orders in the ravine lying dead, a half-naked body with a bare chest and dark, swollen woman's nipples. Baum made a vow to himself, not then but when the war ended. He vowed never to be afraid of anything again.

Baum did not seem the sort of man who had been through and seen that. He was domestic and urbane, worked on Saturday and in deference to his parents appeared in synagogue on the holiest days, in deference also to those more distant in obliterated villages or mass burial pits, but at the same time he did not represent the Jewishness of black hats and suffering, the ancient ways. The war, he imagined, from which he had emerged whole and unharmed, had given him his credentials. He was almost indistinguishable from other citizens except in inner knowing. He ran his business in an English way. In his sparsely furnished office there was only a desk, an old couch, a table, and some chairs. He read everything himself and after some agreement from his wife made all the decisions. He went to lunch with agents who for a long time regarded him lightly, had dinners, and in the office made it a practice to go around and talk to everyone every day. He would sit on the corner of their desk and chat casually, what did they think about this or that, what had they read or heard? His manner was open and talking to him was easy. He sometimes seemed more like the mail clerk than the publisher, and often

had tidbits himself, stories he had heard, gossip, news, feigned horror at the size of advances—how could you hope to publish good books if you went broke in the process? He seemed never to be in a hurry, though the visits were rarely lengthy. He repeated jokes he had heard and called everyone by their first name, even the elevator man, Raymont.

Bowman was not a reader long. The editor who'd had a son left to take a job at Scribner's and Bowman, taking the trouble to find out what his salary had been, took his place. He liked it. The office was a world of its own. It did not run by the clock, he was sometimes there until nine or ten at night and other times having a drink at six. He liked reading the manuscripts and talking to the writers, being responsible for bringing a book into existence, the discussions, editing, galleys, page proofs, jacket. He'd had no clear idea of it before he started but found it fulfilling.

Going home on weekends was a pleasure, sitting down to dinner with his mother—shall we have a cocktail first? she always said—telling her what he was doing. She was fifty-two that year and showing no age but somehow past the thought of remarrying. Her love and all her attention went to her family. During the week Bowman was living in a single room without a bath off Central Park West, and the comparative luxury of his old house stood in contrast.

His mother so liked talking to him, she could have talked to him every day. It was only with difficulty she resisted the impulse to hug and kiss him. She had brought him up from the day he was born and now, when he was the most beautiful, she could only smooth his hair. Even that could be awkward. The love she had given he would pass on to someone else. At the same time he was somehow still the wonderful child he had been in the years when there were just the two of them, when they went to visit Dot and Frank and have dinner at the restaurant. She would never forget the well-dressed woman who, seeing the little boy holding the fork too big for his hand and trying to pick up spaghetti, had said admiringly,

"That is the most beautiful child I have ever seen."

Making little word and picture books from folded paper that was sewn together, writing out his first words with him, the many nights that now seemed a single night, putting him to bed and hearing him say, pleading, "Leave the door open."

All of the days, all of it.

She remembered when the down had appeared on his cheeks, a faint, soft down that she pretended not to see, and then he began to shave, his hair gradually darkened and his features seemed to more resemble his father's. Looking back she could remember every bit of it, most of it with happiness, in fact with nothing but happiness. They were always close, mother and son, without end.

Beatrice had been born, the younger of two girls, in Rochester in the last year and month of the century, 1899. Their father was a teacher who died of the flu, the so-called Spanish flu that had first appeared in Spain and then broke out in America in the fall of 1918, just at the end of the war. More than half a million people died in scenes reminiscent of the plague. Her father had been stricken while walking on Clifford Avenue on a balmy afternoon, and two days later, face discolored, burning with fever and unable to breathe, he died. Afterwards they went to live with her grandparents, who ran a small hotel on Irondequoit Bay, a wooden hotel with a bar and a large, white kitchen and, during the winter, empty rooms. When she was twenty, she came down to New York City. She had distant relatives there, the Gradows, cousins of her mother, who were rich, and she was a number of times in their home.

One of the lost images of Bowman's boyhood was of the mansion—he'd been taken to see it when he was five or six—a great, ornate, gray granite building with, as he remembered it, a moat and latticed windows near the park somewhere but not to be found, like streets in that familiar city that repeatedly appears in dreams. He never bothered to ask his mother about it and if it had been torn down, but there were places along Fifth where it seemed it might have been.

Beatrice, perhaps because of her father's death, which she remembered clearly, had a certain lingering dread of the fall. There was a time, usually late in August, when summer struck the trees with dazzling power and they were rich with leaves but then became, suddenly one day, strangely still, as if in expectation and at that moment aware. They knew. Everything knew, the beetles, the frogs, the crows solemnly walking across the lawn. The sun was at its zenith and embraced the world, but it was ending, all that one loved was at risk.

. . .

Neil Eddins, the other editor, was a southerner, smooth faced and mannerly, who wore striped shirts and made friends easily.

"You were in the navy," he said.

"Yes, were you?"

"They wouldn't have me. I couldn't get into the program. I was in the merchant marine."

"Where was that?"

"In the East River, mostly. The crew was Italian. They could never get them to sail."

"Not much danger of being sunk."

"Not by the enemy," Eddins said. "Were you ever sunk?"

"Some people thought we were."

"What do you mean?"

"It's too long a story."

Gretchen, who was the secretary, walked by as they talked. She had a good figure and an attractive face marred by three or four large inflamed blemishes, some unnameable skin trouble, on her cheeks and forehead that made her miserable though she never betrayed it. Eddins gave a slight moan when she had passed.

"Gretchen, you mean?"

It was known she had a boyfriend.

"Oh, my God," Eddins said. "Forget the acne or whatever that is, we can clear that up. Actually I like women who look a little like boxers, high cheekbones, lips a bit thick. What a dream I had the other night! I had three cute girls, one after the other. It was in a little room, almost a stall, and I was starting in with the fourth and someone was trying to come in. No, no, damn it, not now! I was shouting. The fourth one's ass was right up against me as she bent over to take off her shoes. Am I being too disgusting?"

"No, not really."

"Do you have dreams like that?"

"I usually only dream about one at a time," Bowman said.

"Anyone in particular?" Eddins said. "What I really like is a voice, a low voice. When I get married, that's the first thing I'm going to tell her, speak in a low voice."

Gretchen passed on her way back. She gave a slight smile.

"Jaysus," Eddins said, "they know what they're doing, don't they? They love it."

After work they sometimes went up to Clarke's for a drink. Third Avenue was a street of drinkers and many local bars, always in the shadow of the elevated and the sound of it passing overhead, rocking by tenements and daylight dropping through the tracks after it had gone by.

They talked about books and writing. Eddins had had only a year of college but had read everything, he was a member of the Joyce Society and Joyce was his hero.

"But I don't normally like a writer to give me too much of a character's thoughts and feelings," he said. "I like to see them, hear what they say, and decide for myself. The appearance of things. I like dialogue. They talk and you understand everything. Do you like John O'Hara?"

"Somewhat," Bowman said. "I like some O'Hara."

"What's wrong with him?"

"He can be too nasty."

"He writes about that kind of people. *Appointment in Samarra* is a great book. It just swept me away. He was twenty-eight when he wrote it."

"Tolstoy was younger. Tolstoy was twenty-three."

"When he wrote what?"

"Childhood, Boyhood, Youth."

Eddins hadn't read it. In fact he'd never heard of it, he admitted.

"It made him famous overnight," Bowman said. "They all became famous overnight, that's the interesting thing. Fitzgerald, Maupassant, Faulkner, when he wrote *Sanctuary,* that is. You should read *Childhood*. There's a wonderful short chapter where Tolstoy describes his father, tall and bald and with just two great passions in his life, you think it's going to be his family and his lands, but it's cards and women. An amazing chapter."

"You know what she told me today?"

"Who?"

"Gretchen. She told me the Bolshoi was in town."

"I didn't know she was interested in ballet."

"She also told me what Bolshoi means. It means big, great."

"So?"

Eddins made a cupping gesture with each hand.

"Why is she doing this to me?" he said. "I wrote a little poem to her, like the one Byron wrote to Caroline Lamb, one of the many women including countesses he put it to, if I may use the term."

"He was in Dionysian flux," Bowman said.

"Flux. What is that, Chinese word? Anyway, here's my poem: 'Bolshoi, Oh, boy.' "

"Referring to what?"

"Are you kidding? She's flaunting them every minute."

"What's Byron's poem?" Bowman said. "I don't know it."

"It's said to be the shortest poem in the English language, but mine is actually shorter. 'Caro Lamb, God damn.' "

"Is she the one he married?"

"No, she was married. She was a countess. If I knew a countess or two, I'd be a better person. Especially if she were leaning a little towards beauty, the countess, I mean. In fact she doesn't even have to be a countess. That's a word that invites vulgarization, doesn't it? In high school I had a girlfriend—of course we never did anything—named Ava. Anyway a beautiful name. She also had a body. I wonder where she is now, now that we're grown up. I should get her address somehow unless she's married, ghastly thought. On the other hand, not too ghastly if you think about it a certain way."

"Where did you go to high school?"

"The last year I went to boarding school near Charlottesville. We ate our meals together in the dining hall. The headmaster used to light dollar bills to show the proper attitude toward money. He ate a hard-boiled egg every single morning, shell and all. I never quite got around to that although I was always hungry. Starving. I was probably there because of Ava and what they were afraid might happen. My folks didn't believe in sex."

"What parents do?"

They were sitting in the middle of the crowded bar. The doors to the street were open, and the noise of the train, a loud crashing like a wave, drowned out what they were saying from time to time.

"You know the one about the Hungarian count?" Eddins said. "Anyway, there was this count, and his wife said to him one day that their son was growing up and wasn't it time he learned about the birds and the

bees? All right, the count said, so he took him for a walk. They went down to a stream and stood on a bridge looking down at peasant girls washing clothes. The count said, your mother wants me to talk to you about the birds and the bees, what they do. Yes, father, the son said. Well, you see the girls down there? Yes, father. You remember a few days ago when we came here, what we did with them? Yes, father. Well, that's what the birds and the bees do."

He was stylish, Eddins, wearing a pale summer suit, slightly wrinkled, though it was a little late in the year for it. At the same time he managed a carelessness about his person, the pockets of his jacket were filled with various things, his hair needed cutting in back. He spent more than he could afford for his clothes, the British American House was his favorite.

"You know, back home there was a girl in the neighborhood, good-looking girl, who was a little retarded . . ."

"Retarded," Bowman said.

"I don't know what was wrong, a little slow."

"Don't tell me anything criminal now."

"You're such a gentleman," Eddins said. "You're the type they used to have."

"Have where?"

"Everywhere. My father would have liked you. If I had your looks . . ."

"Yes, what?"

"I'd cut a swath through this town."

Bowman was feeling the drinks himself. Among the brilliant bottles in the mirror behind the bar he could see himself, jacket and tie, New York evening, people around him, faces. He looked clean, composed, somehow blended together with the naval officer he had been. He remembered the days clearly though they had already become only a shadow in his life. Days at sea. Mr. Bowman! Yes, sir! The pride he would never lose.

In the doorway then, just coming in, was the girl Eddins had tried to describe, with a boxer's face, flat-cheeked with a somewhat wide nose. He could see the upper half of her in the mirror as she passed, she was with her boyfriend or husband, wearing a light dress with orange flowers. She stood out, but Eddins hadn't seen her, he was talking to someone else. It

didn't matter, the city was filled with such women, not exactly filled but you saw them at night.

Eddins had turned and caught sight of her.

"Oh, lord," he said, "I knew it. There's the girl I'd like to make love to."

"You don't even know her."

"I don't want to know her, I want to fuck her."

"What a romantic you are."

At work, though, he was a choir boy and even seemed or tried to seem unaware of Gretchen. He handed Bowman a folded sheet of paper, somewhat offhandedly, and glanced away. It was another poem, typed in the middle of the page:

> In the Plaza Hotel, to his sorrow,
> Said the love of his life, Gretchen caro,
> It may be infra dig,
> But, my God, you are big,
> Could we possibly wait till tomorrow?

"Shouldn't that be *cara*?" Bowman said.

"What do you mean?"

"The feminine."

"Here," Eddins said, "give it back, I don't want it falling into the wrong hands."