Watergate could have turned out differently. In this novel, it does. The story is told by a presidential aide who becomes entangled in a web of bribery, blackmail, arson and espionage. The result: The 38th president is not Gerry Ford.

The 38th President

THE 38th PRESIDENT

ISBN 978-1-60145-626-7

Printed in the United States of America.

This is an historical novel. The author's postscript describes which of the major events were historical, and which fiction. With the exceptions noted there, this book is fiction. Any similarity to real events or real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Published by:
W.P. Gordon
<gordon@refraction.org>
2008

THE

38th

PRESIDENT

Malignant Fate sat by
and smiled….
Thomas Gray,
Death of a Favorite Cat

Paul Wonnacott

1

Money the Old Fashioned Way

Love of money is the root of all evil.
I Timothy 6:7
Lack of money is the root of all evil.
George Bernard Shaw,
Maxims for Revolutionists

As he reached the top of the stairs, the President turned and waved to the subdued, saddened crowd. One last time, he smiled in his strained, painfully self-conscious way. Followed by his wife and two daughters, he stepped into the helicopter and it lifted off towards Andrews Air Force Base and the waiting Air Force One. The 37th President of the United States was leaving Washington in disgrace, the first chief executive to resign.

His successor was watching inconspicuously behind the bushes in the rose garden; he did not want to add to Mr. Nixon's humiliation with his presence. As the helicopter rose above the trees and turned southward across the Ellipse, the new President paused thoughtfully for a moment, and then strode into the Oval Office where I was waiting.

The new administration was about to begin.

As he passed through the door, he was already giving me instructions.

"Our first priority will be the speech to the nation. How's it coming?"

"Quite well, Mr. President. A draft should be available within a few hours. We could even speed it up. As you suggested, the main theme will be reconciliation—reaching out to your political opponents with a plea for cooperation."

"Good. You should also begin intensive work on personnel changes. We don't need to make any cabinet changes right away, but it's not too early to start thinking about what we'll do a few months down the road. Some day we'll have to deal with the Kissinger-

Schlesinger problem." He paused. Presumably he was thinking about the spat between the Secretaries of State and Defense at a recent cabinet meeting. After a few moments, he went on:

"Now, about the speech. I'm sure you realize the importance of making it upbeat and forward-looking; we need to convey the clear message that I'm taking firm control. Even more, we need to change the subject—away from the dreary tale of burglary, obstruction of justice, and looming constitutional crisis."

Our brief meeting was apparently over. I rose and looked toward the President:

"Anything else, Mr. President?"

Unfortunately, the subject was not going to be changed. Another dismal chapter in America's political scandal was about to be played out. There would be no more than a brief intermission in America's nightmare.

In fact, my own personal nightmare was soon to come crowding in on me. One afternoon, about two weeks after Mr. Agnew took the oath as President, I returned to my office. As I was flipping through my telephone messages, Susan came in.

"There was one message I didn't write down—a strange call from George Horner at the Justice Department. He urgently wants to talk to you—right away—but he also insisted that you shouldn't call him back. He mumbled something about being out of his office all the time. He said he would call back early this evening."

About 6:00 p.m., he did call again. Susan buzzed.

"Mr. Horner on line 2."

Against my better judgment, I lifted the phone. Gingerly. Through the earpiece, I heard a familiar voice:

"Hello, Mike."

It wasn't Horner. But I knew precisely who it was. The voice continued:

"Congratulations on your new position. Pretty lucky for you. And for me."

"Huh? Why the hell are you calling? We have nothing more to talk about."

"Really? Not so long ago, Mike, you needed me. Now I need you. The investigation up here is getting intense. Now you've moved over to the West Wing, I want you to derail it."

"You know I can't do that." I realized I was whispering, hoarsely.

"Why not? You guys didn't waste any time sacking the old U.S. attorney up here. Let me congratulate you on the new guy. He should be easy to jerk around. See to it that he forgets all about the little problem in our office."

"No. Absolutely not."

"Don't answer too quickly. If I go down, I'll take you with me."

"The answer's still no. I won't be blackmailed. I'll have to take my chances."

"Think about it, Mike, think about it. You asked me to use my imagination. I am. I imagine that I might do much more than just take you with me. I might take the President, too."

"That's ridiculous. He had absolutely nothing to do with your little caper."

"Maybe not. But who will believe that? You were acting on his behalf. Will people really think that you squeezed me without his knowledge?"

"Don't you realize the country...."

The line went dead. He was returning my insult. He hung up on me. It was my turn to be left staring at a humming receiver.

I first started working for Ted Agnew when he was Baltimore County Executive in 1966, shortly before his successful campaign for governor of Maryland. Ted, I called him, even after he became president. If I may say so, it was my idea for him to switch his public name to Ted. Too bad the switch proved temporary. Spiro sounds too much like a tropical disease. And red-blooded Americans don't want to think of their president as a foreigner—particularly with a name they've never heard before. Anyway, in March of that year. I went over to the Morris & Montgomery advertising agency in Baltimore to see if they couldn't come up with something real American in case Ted did decide to make a run for governor. They

succeeded. They wrote a campaign ditty aimed directly at middle America—or, at least, at middle Maryland:

> My kind of guy, Ted Agnew is,
> A bright, new, shining day ahead....

Just the right combination of fluff and military beat. With it, Ted marched into the Governor's Mansion in Annapolis. I was in lockstep right behind him.

Little did I expect that Agnew would be president within seven years. Even less did I expect to land in jail a year after that. But, as Lenin and Hitler discovered, jail is a marvelous place to get some writing done. Few distractions, and your time really isn't worth much. Most of this story was written during my 18 months in the slammer. But I have waited more than four decades to publish it because I didn't want to reopen old wounds while the main characters were still alive. In a way, this delay turned out to be fortunate. With the end of the cold war, I don't need to worry about endangering Russian officials who helped us. I am also free to explain why my lawyer and I talked—obscurely, I admit—about national security complications. At the time, these appeals to national security were dismissed as transparent and crude attempts to divert attention from the legal case against me. On the contrary, they were firmly based on fact.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

In 1966, Maryland was overwhelmingly Democratic. In the whole history of the state, there had only been four Republican governors, the last being McKeldin in the early fifties. Ted had become County Executive in suburban Baltimore, running uphill as a Republican. He faced the problem of so many politicians. His first big step—as a Republican county executive—threatened to be his last; it left him facing the stone wall of solid Democratic power blocking his way to statewide office.

Then lightning struck. Not just your average 2 million volt variety, but a huge bolt that split the state's Democratic Party right down the middle. The Party was based on the Roosevelt coalition of blue collar

ethnics, blacks, liberal professionals, and professional liberals. Their Achilles' heel lay in the tension between white and black voters. Blacks had little in common with the white, old-money machine that had dominated the state's Democratic Party under Governor Tawes. The Party's delicate balance was upset by perennial gubernatorial candidate George Mahoney. Like a bush-league Harold Stassen, he had soldiered thoughtlessly on in the face of repeated rebuffs at the hands of the voters.

Then, to the shock and bewilderment of the Democratic establishment, he unexpectedly won the Democratic primary for governor in 1966. His not-so-subtle message—"Your home is your castle"—was an attack on fair housing laws, and appealed to the threatened white worker. The liberal elite of the party were thunderstruck. "Mahoney-Baloney" they tried to dismiss him. But there he was, the official candidate of the Democratic Party. For Ted Agnew, the big chance had arrived.

His campaign was a sharp contrast to Mahoney's. Where Mahoney played on racial fears, Ted held out a hand to his black constituents; he proposed an open housing law and repeal of the state law banning interracial marriage.

In his speeches, Ted slipped comfortably into the old Republican tradition, the use of alliteration to skewer his opponents. He would, he promised, give the citizens of Maryland the good government they deserved after years of Democratic dither, dawdle, and delay. He was not yet up to the standard set by former Governor McKeldin, who had denounced "the plundering potentates of the Potomac and the pusillanimous parasites of the palace." But Ted was still warming up for the style that would become his trademark when he became Vice President.

In the showdown with Mahoney and his redneck rabble, Ted was anointed as the sound, moderate, and even liberal contender. His record, said the *New York Times*, "beckoned liberals of all stations of life in both parties." Now, the game was to avoid mistakes; the election was ours to lose. That turned out to be no problem. The press were having so much fun carving up Mahoney that they scarcely noticed what we were doing. Agnew swept to victory.

The afternoon after the gubernatorial election, Ted had me, Eric Crawthorne, and Dave Meyer into his office to start planning for his "first" administration. After our efforts in the campaign, the three of us assumed that we would form his inner circle, and this meeting was Ted's way of confirming our status. Surprisingly, in the heat of the campaign, we had paid almost no attention to what we would do if Ted won. This was my first election campaign, and I wondered if it would be bad luck to start planning before we actually won. We made a quick list of high-priority items. Ted's old cronies Eric and Dave would work with him on cabinet appointments.

I was mildly surprised at being cut out of this assignment, even if I was a relative newcomer. Ted quickly added, however, that he expected me to be an "ideas" man. I could start with two tasks. In consultation with Ted, Eric, Dave and a larger group of friends and consultants, I was to start planning for the implementation of the promises set out in his campaign speeches. As it turned out, we were very successful. Most of his promises were pushed through the legislature and became law. The notable failure was in revising the Constitution. Ted succeeded in getting a state constitutional convention established, but their resulting handiwork was rejected in a referendum.

My second major task was to work through the budget to see where we might consider new programs, and where we might trim, particularly where Democratic constituencies had gotten their snouts too deeply into the trough. But everything was to be tentative for the moment. Ted intended to govern as a moderate. He knew it would be impossible to repeat his victory in this overwhelmingly Democratic state if he gored too many sacred cows of the large liberal constituencies.

I disappeared during the day into the budget office, working methodically through the major categories of spending, particularly roads and education. About four every afternoon, I would emerge for the cocktail hour, and spend two or three hours batting around possible themes for the administration. Next would come a dinner with party loyalists and contributors, ostensibly to pick their brains, but mostly to touch base and give them the feeling that they were

being consulted on our future course of action. I generally didn't get home until midnight, when I took a nightcap and flopped into bed beside the already-sleeping Pat.

I knew I had a problem when I came home late one night, started to crawl into bed, and found two bulky paperbound volumes under the covers on my side. In the dim light, I could barely make out the title: "The Budget of the United States, 1966." The next morning, I decided that Ted's budget work would have to wait. Pat and I spent a couple of hours going over the conflicts between my job and home life. The result was my agreement to stay at home on Sundays with her and the kids. I also agreed to skip the endless dinners one night a week—usually Wednesday—and spend it at home. Several weeks later, when I expressed reservations to Ted about a dinner meeting with the homebuilders association, he asked me what was up. Cautiously, I mentioned my pact with Pat. His response astonished me. It was simply one word, "Great." In the years that followed, I was surprised how much that one word counted when I was tempted to judge Ted harshly.

Pat didn't like the continuous round of dinners. I had long since given up asking her to join me. But she was looking forward to the inaugural ball.

The evening of the ball, the gods shone upon us. The weather was clear and warm for January, almost balmy. People arrived without coats. There would be no repeat of the fiasco at the last presidential inauguration, when there was a mix-up in the cloakroom of one of the hotels and it took people as much as two hours to retrieve their minks. Keith O'Donnell, the president of the bricklayers' union, had rented a limousine for the evening and asked us to join him. I quickly accepted. As insecure Republicans in a Democratic state, we were trying hard to build bridges to some other unions besides the thuggish Teamsters. Furthermore, I had genuinely enjoyed Keith's company at several of our cocktail hours and he had become an occasional tennis partner. I was looking forward to meeting his wife and enjoying a relaxed and upbeat evening. Philip O'Neil, who ran a small construction firm, and his wife, Jo, rounded out the table.

The slowly-circling mirror-balls glittered and the band blared, more than a little too loud. I had anticipated the noise, and arranged for a table at the far corner of the ballroom. It was partially protected from the blast of the band by a drawn curtain, which the hotel used on occasion to divide the ballroom. The shelter of the curtain allowed the six of us to carry on a conversation, while still following the events of the evening. Up at the head table, Ted was the gracious host, with his short, humorous speech about the great state of Maryland and his many friends in attendance. It was one of those pleasant, memorable occasions that helps to make politics worthwhile.

Except for one thing. About half way through the evening, when Pat and I stopped at the end of a dance, we were approached by a slightly inebriated Todd Coddington, a highway contractor who had built many of the secondary roads in Baltimore County when Ted was County Executive. As the Coddingtons passed us, Todd grabbed my arm and said:

"Remember, you owe me one—a big one. I've been good to you."

Without thinking, I passed off his comment lightly, "Todd, you know we always remember our friends."

Now that was odd. I couldn't remember Todd being a particularly big contributor. His donations had, if anything, been somewhat light. After all, he was a road builder who depended on the government for his livelihood, and he could be expected to chip in generous political contributions at election time. For the rest of the evening, the puzzle kept coming back to me during lulls in the conversation. What had he meant? I was turning the same puzzle over in my mind as I fell asleep that evening.

Eric and I got the choice offices—one on either side of Ted's. They were pitifully small, but that didn't matter. Being close to the governor was the symbol of rank and prestige. There was a direct connecting door between each of our offices and Ted's. However, K.C. complained that she couldn't keep track of us when we flitted back and forth into Ted's office. To humor her, the two connecting doors were locked from the governor's side, and Eric and I had to get

into Ted's office by the main entrance, passing between K.C.'s desk and those of the other two secretaries. Somehow, the locked door made my office seem even smaller. The last occupant had tried to make it look wider by having a large mirror installed along one wall, but all that did was to make me feel self-conscious whenever I had a visitor. I vowed to get rid of the ugly thing, but never got around to it.

Several weeks later, I was gossiping with K.C. after the other secretaries had left and the office was empty. I casually mentioned the locked door.

"Well actually, Mike, locking the door wasn't my idea. It was the governor's. He wanted more privacy. He was afraid that you and Eric would be offended by the locked doors, and asked me to give you the story about not being able to keep track of you." She glanced around furtively and lowered her voice. "As a matter of fact, the governor doesn't always keep the door locked on Eric's side, and I do have trouble knowing which office Eric will be in when he gets a call." Apparently, my surprise showed up on my face, and she quickly added, "Please don't tell the governor I told you."

So I was being partly cut out of the action. But why? I could scarcely ask the governor. He wanted my door locked, but not Eric's. How could he possibly doubt my loyalty? Or was there something going on that I didn't really want to know about?

When I got back to the office at about four, the air conditioner had broken down and the office was a sweltering 105 degrees. Most of the staff had been dismissed early, including the two junior secretaries. K.C. was temporarily out, so, for the moment, there was nobody guarding the outer office. My office door, and Eric's, had been propped open and our windows raised to provide cross-ventilation. As I went into my office, I noticed that the connecting door to the governor's office had also been opened about a foot to increase the circulation. The governor had a guest, but, over the hum of the fans, I couldn't hear what they were talking about or tell who it was. I began to leaf through my telephone messages.

Then, through the corner of my eye, I noticed in the mirror that Ted's visitor was getting up out of his chair and turning toward the door. It was Todd Coddington. As Ted came around his desk to say goodbye, he came into view in my mirror. The two men stood together briefly with their backs to me, large circles of sweat staining their shirts under each armpit. They were laughing, and Coddington was jovially slapping the governor's back. As Ted turned back toward his desk, I could see an envelope in his hand. He went briskly behind his desk. I took a few steps toward the center of my office to follow his movements in the mirror. I caught sight of him again just as he was sliding his top drawer closed. His hands were empty.

Without thinking, I stepped back a few paces and sat down on the sofa so that he wouldn't be able to see me. I had to get out before he found out that I was there; I didn't want him wondering if I had seen him. Bending down so that I wouldn't be visible in the mirror, I crept to the door to the outer office and peeked out. Nobody. I straightened up and quietly walked out of the office. I could hear Eric gently humming to himself in his office, but there was no chance he would see me; his office had no mirror. I headed down the hall to the rest room. I had to have time to think. I entered the first stall, locked it, and sat down.

After about five minutes, Eric and Dave came into the john. They were griping to one another about the long hours and the dullness of many of the papers we all had to work through. I quickly raised my feet, resting them against the door. I had no desire for Eric, Dave—or anyone else, for that matter—to know that I was even in the building. Dave changed the subject.

"I understand that Coddington was in to see the old man again today."

"Sure was. I wonder how much he forked over this time."

"Shhh."

"Don't be paranoid. Nobody's here."

"I'm surprised he keeps this up, now he's governor. A lot riskier than when he was only the county executive."

"Ah, a naive paranoid. That's the way politics are played. Besides, we don't really *know* that Ted is keeping the money for himself. He may be passing it along to his campaign treasurer. He may…"

Dave interrupted. "But, if he's going to use it for the campaign, why doesn't he just have Coddington give it directly to the campaign treasurer?"

"You don't think people want to give money without getting credit, do you? When they give money, they want to be sure the governor really knows where it comes from. They want to be able to slap him on the back."

"But why in cash?"

There was an edge of exasperation in Eric's reply: "Lots of contributors play both sides of the street; they give to both candidates. They don't want either candidate to know. Contributors also know politicians like cash. They can use it all sorts of ways, um, such as walking-around money during elections. And contributors are not always scrupulous about how they get the money to make political contributions. They may not—Horrors!—have paid taxes on it. But that's their problem, not ours. We don't know how the money is actually raised."

"Perhaps we don't really want to know anything more, period."

"Bingo! You've got it."

"The hours at this job are really getting to me. What are you and Dotty doing tomorrow evening? I hear that the new play at Olney is…"

The door closed and they were gone.

I waited there for about another half hour, trying to figure out what to do next. The air conditioning was back on. I left the stall and washed my face to cool down. I then proceeded, as normally as I could, down the hall and into the office. I asked K.C. if I had any important messages, to give her the impression that I had been out all afternoon.

"Just the usual suspects. The slips are on your desk."

I must have sat in my office for at least two hours, wondering about what I had seen and heard. I wondered if Eric had been right,

if Ted might pass the money along to the campaign. On one thing, Eric undoubtedly *was* right: it was better not to know.

Then, for some reason, I became uncontrollably curious about what was actually in that envelope. I glanced at the copy of the governor's schedule. 7:30 pm: dinner with Governor Rockefeller at the Hay Adams, Washington. He would be out all evening. I looped out through the outer office. K.C. was gone for the evening. Eric's office was empty. I cautiously opened the door to the governor's office and stepped in.

I locked the door to the outer office. I didn't want to be surprised by the cleaning staff. If I heard them starting to turn the lock, I would have time to get out into my office. Next I slipped over to Eric's door and locked it, just on the chance that he might come back. Then I unlocked the door between my office and the governor's in case I had to beat a hasty retreat. I cautiously slid the top drawer open and lifted out the plain brown envelope. It was sealed, but it felt as if there were quite a wad in it.

It was too late to stop now. I went back into my office and got another plain brown envelope. I doubled back, slit open the envelope, and slid out the money. Twenty-five twenties. Only $500. I was just sealing it back in the new envelope when I heard Eric pass through the outer office and into his room. He was singing, and apparently had had quite a bit to drink. I quickly put the envelope back into Ted's top drawer. Then I unlocked the door to the outer office as quietly as I could and retreated back into my office, dropping the empty envelope in my waste basket. Eric was still singing. I silently left my office and slipped out of the building.

I slept only fitfully that night. About five the next morning, as I was rolling in bed, I realized: When I left Ted's office, *I forgot to unlock Eric's inner door. And I forgot to lock mine*.

4

KGB

The Party's Program presents the task of educating the new person ["new Soviet Man"], harmoniously combining in him spiritual wealth, moral purity, and physical perfection.

KGB Alpha Team Training Manual

Ever since he had joined the KGB just out of the Kiev Technical Institute, Aleksandr had dreamt of a posting in Washington. That was where the action was, and Washington would give him an ideal window on the world outside the Soviet Union. It was, however, better not to appear too eager; anyone who openly campaigned for a Washington posting was automatically under suspicion. Furthermore, his Ukrainian background did not help, particularly as his grandfather and aunt had been victims of the famine of the 1930s, when Stalin shipped wheat out of the Ukraine to feed the Russians.

His break came through Katrina, although he still ached when he thought of how it had happened. Four years ago, he had begun to date her at the KTI, where she had come to study electrical engineering. When they first met, he had been puzzled why anyone so brilliant, vivacious, and ambitious would want to leave her home in Moscow to come to Kiev, with its drabness and, for Russians, rather hostile atmosphere. She had lightly put off his questions with an implausible, slightly patronizing reply: People in Moscow had a responsibility to keep in touch with the rest of the country.

Aleksandr didn't press the point. On almost any other subject, they talked so openly and effortlessly. He had never met anyone with whom conversation was so easy and pleasurable. He didn't want to spoil it by pressing on what seemed, for some reason, to be a sensitive subject.

It was only after they had been dating for six months that he discovered the truth. One evening, they went to the French Club's production of Lehar's *La Veuve Joyeuse*. They laughed over a joke by the merry—and very rich—widow. At an embassy ball, she suggested to her old Petrovanian lover, Count Danilo, that someone she had just met might soon confess his undying love for her. "After all, every man I've met tonight says he loves me. But we both know, they just love my money." At intermission, Aleksandr and Katrina's laughter turned to serious conversation. Katrina told him of her real reason for wanting to get out of Moscow. Her father was a general in the KGB, and she despised the swarm of junior KGB officers and their crude efforts to manipulate her to further their own careers. They were, she suspected, interested not so much in her, as in the huge step up the KGB ladder which would go to anyone who married her. It was a twist on the *Merry Widow's* puzzle: Did a man love her for herself, or for her money?

This posed a problem for Aleksandr, as he had been rethinking his own career for the past several months. His original intent, to study history, politics, economics, and English as the prelude to a career in the foreign service, was beginning to lose its attraction. Some of his older brother's friends had joined the foreign service, and they were now beginning to return on leave from their initial overseas assignments.

They did not have very inspiring jobs—mostly issuing visas and filling out endless forms at the end of the world. In fact, their class at the Foreign Service Institute had engaged in a little poll during the two-week period after their graduation, while waiting for their first assignments. What were the worst places to be sent? What really was "the end of the world?" Katmandu, Mogodishu, and LaPaz topped the list. Then, his three friends had each drawn one of the short straws! And they were no dummies. Aleksandr remember how he had idolized the older boys when they were teenagers, for their athletic ability, intelligence, and apparently effortless success with girls. If these guys could end up in such places, what were Aleksandr's prospects? Gregorii, who had been sent to Bolivia, was particularly sour in his reports: LaPaz was the only cemetery with

traffic lights. It was the only city above 2,000 meters that was also below ground—apparently a reference to its surrounding mountains, but perhaps also to its lack of a night life. It was the only city in the Western hemisphere where you could delight in the gracious living of the gulag. It was the place where society matrons traveled by Llama, side-saddle. And so on.

But if not the foreign service, what was Aleksandr to do? He had floundered around for several months. Then, after listening to the campus recruiter for the KGB, he was beginning to give that organization serious thought. They might be a bit rough and ruthless at the edges, but you didn't have to wait for an old age pension before you acquired responsibility. (It is true that, long ago, Molotov and Gromyko had gotten senior positions in foreign affairs while they were still young, but they had been cronies of Stalin. Their long tenure at the top underlined just how difficult it was for younger people to rise to positions of responsibility now.) Furthermore, those who went into the quasi-military KGB were exempt from being drafted into the army; he would avoid those wasted years.

To hedge his bets, Aleksandr registered to take an electrical engineering course in the spring semester of his junior year. To get ahead in the KGB, you had to demonstrate some talent for technical subjects. When he told Katrina about a month ago of his intention to take this course, he passed it off lightly: he had to take it so he would be able to understand what she and her friends were talking about at dorm parties. He could wait to share his thoughts about the KGB with her—or so he had imagined.

Now, what was he supposed to do? He thought that he was in love with her, and now he finds out that she not only is the daughter of a KGB general, but despises young KGB officers who are trying to use her. Should he give up the KGB as a career? But what were the alternatives? He had felt an enormous relief at finding out about the foreign service before it was too late; he couldn't stomach the thought of reopening that possibility. Switch into teaching history? He hardly wanted to spend the rest of his life spinning Soviet fairy tales and pretending he had never heard of the purges of the 1930s, the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, or the Katyn Forest massacres. He

could perhaps switch to engineering; he had always enjoyed mathematics and science, and found them easy. He still had no university-level training in them, however, and a switch now would cost him an extra year or two before he graduated.

How about making a clean breast of it to Katrina? He could try the most imaginative approach of all: the truth. He had known her and come to love her in the last few months, before he had any idea of what her father did. After all, she had been evasive whenever the subject of her family came up. He knew that she had an older brother who was doing his time as a lieutenant in the artillery; she had a brattish 12-year old younger sister; her father had some sort of government job, very vaguely defined; and her mother was teaching French and German at a high school. He clearly hadn't known about her father; he loved her for herself. His interest in the KGB had just been one of those weird coincidences.

But would she—could she—believe this? After all, he and his older brother had good contacts with young people in the foreign service, who were notorious gossips; Katrina might reasonably suppose that Aleksandr had heard about her father from them. What would his story be? That he just happened to reconsider the foreign service and switch his attention to the KGB three months after they met. He just happened to decide on an electrical engineering course so that he could carry on a conversation at parties. Aleksandr just couldn't see how he could tell a believable story, even if he stuck to the truth. And if he started to embroider the truth—Katrina was too clever not to see through him, and if she caught him in a lie, it would all be over.

He went around and around in his own mind; he saw no way out. His preoccupation with his personal quandary was interfering with his studies. Fortunately, the semester was almost over and he was pretty much assured of good grades even if he slipped a bit on his final exams. Katrina was obviously becoming concerned, however. She sensed that something was wrong, but didn't know what.

It therefore came as a great relief when Katrina suggested that they go to Moscow together for the New Year's break, and stay with her parents. She had already had her father send a couple of plane

tickets. Maybe, when Aleksandr got to see the situation more completely, he would figure out what to do.

On the trip to Moscow, Aleksandr squirmed uneasily. It was his first flight on *Aeroflot*, and the sickly, sour, vinagery stench of the TU 134 made him feel both claustrophobic and queasy. However, they were lucky on the weather. When they came into the Moscow airport, it was clear and calm—but very cold: 26 degrees below zero. With the dry stillness of the air, the temperature did not seem so bad. Aleksandr found himself bounding down the ramp, gulping in the pure cold air, and trying to get rid of the stench of the airplane. The car of Katrina's father was waiting for them, and they were soon at Katrina's home.

By Moscow standards, it was huge—a large kitchen, dining room, and living room, with three spacious bedrooms, a small study for the General, and a bathroom. The driver quickly put the bags at the end of the hall, between the two smaller bedrooms, and disappeared to pick up Katrina's parents. Not only was the apartment large, it was also exceptionally neat and tidy; the chairs were all aligned with precision around the dining room table, and newspapers were laid out on the coffee table in the living room. The military passion for neatness, thought Aleksandr. The apartment was also comfortable, however; the furniture was new and of unusual quality. While Katrina was out of the room, Aleksandr surreptitiously flipped over one of the cushions on the sofa. A German label. Katrina's father had obviously used his connections to get the best.

Aleksandr collapsed unceremoniously on the sofa and began to leaf through the last several copies of *Izvestia*. With his recent exams, he had not kept up with what was going on in the world, and it occurred to him that, with his interest in politics and economics, he might be expected to comment on recent world events during dinner. He was uncertain if Katrina had told her parents much about him. With a smile, he thought she probably had. He noticed that Katrina had disappeared down the hall. She had not complained about the smell of the plane, but the shower had now been running for over 10 minutes. Presumably she was scrubbing off the grunge inherited

from *Aeroflot*. Aleksandr glanced over a couple of lifeless articles on the recent Party Congress, and began to feel unusually drowsy.

The chauffeur drove up to the apartment building with General Kantarov and his wife at about 4:00 p.m. The next day was New Year's, and they had taken the opportunity to skip out of the office parties to get home early, to stretch the three day weekend they were looking forward to with Katrina and Aleksandr. Like most students, Katrina did not write many letters home, but she had begun to do so more frequently in the last several months. There were the usual, breezy comments about college life and her courses. In the early letters, there were a few casual comments about a new friend, Aleksandr. As time went by, the letters became more frequent and the comments about Aleksandr more pervasive. It didn't take any reading between the lines to realize that Katrina felt that she had found "the one." General Kantarov and his wife were looking forward to meeting their prospective son-in-law. Their younger daughter had been shipped off to her grandmother's for the holiday. They would have a relaxed three days alone with Katrina and Aleksandr.

As they came through the front door, Aleksandr was snoozing, sprawled across the sofa. He awoke with a start, and began quickly to reassemble the newspapers that he had scattered about. The Kantarovs pretended not to notice. They took an unusual time to carefully hang up their coats; they even brought out a brush to whisk away the snow and imaginary lint. Aleksandr gratefully noticed their delay; one point for them.

By the time they came into the living room, Aleksandr had tidied up, and was standing stiffly.

"Pleased to meet you, General. Pleased to meet you, Madame Kantarova." Damn. Why couldn't he relax? He was immediately struck by the easy cordiality of the Kantarovs, and by the friendly, warm blue eyes of the General. It was to come as a shock to him two days later to notice how cold those blue eyes could suddenly become, when the General spoke sharply to his driver about an undelivered message.

The dinner was perfect. It had been prepared and was being served by the teenage daughter of a neighbor, who wanted to get into the restaurant business and was hoping for a good word from the Kantarovs. The candlelight flickered and the wine flowed. The conversation began lightly. How was the trip? Aleksandr had been impressed with the skill of the pilot, who had greased the big plane smoothly onto the Moscow runway without the least hint of a bounce. This was his first flight, and he had been somewhat surprised when the passengers broke out clapping as the plane landed. Presumably that was what planes were supposed to do. Aleksandr was careful not to mention the plane's stench.

He appreciated being picked up by the driver, who gave them a brief tour across Red Square, past the Kremlin and the smartly strutting soldiers as they changed the guard at Lenin's tomb. What was he studying at the Institute, and how did he like his courses? History, politics, economics, and English, but he was thinking of working in some electrical engineering and had already signed up for one course. Good. Electrical engineering and computers were going to be the secret of national success, although the General was concerned that Moscow planners would not have the imagination and flexibility needed to keep up with the West or even Japan. Aleksandr noted the mild criticism and the trust in his discretion that it implied.

He began to relax, and asked the General about his experiences. They were roughly what Aleksandr expected. During the Great Patriotic War against Hitler, the General had been a young lieutenant in an armored division, commanding one of the heavily-armored, powerful new T34 tanks that were better than anything that Hitler could field. He participated in the heavy fighting around Stalingrad, where Soviet tanks scored their greatest victory over the German invaders. For the young lieutenant, the succession of battlefield triumphs were bittersweet; most of his comrades were killed. He switched to military intelligence as part of the occupying force in Germany. He had then been invited by his previous commanding officer to join the KGB. He found the work fascinating. It was such a

good way to know what was going on in the world. Perhaps another mild criticism of the Soviet Union, thought Aleksandr.

Soon thereafter, once the coffee and cake had been served and most of the dishes cleared away, the General congratulated the teenage neighbor on the meal and said that she could go. He got up and walked to the door with her. On the way back, he made a quick detour into the living room. He switched on the record player, and the strains of Brahms' second piano concerto were soon filling the apartment, perhaps a trifle too loud. Aleksandr wondered if even the General had to worry about his apartment being bugged.

The conversation now broke down into two halves, one between Aleksandr and the General, and one between Katrina and her mother. The two women were talking excitedly about the new year's celebrations and the plans for the four of them to see the sights of Moscow the next afternoon. Aleksandr and the General paused briefly to listen to their conversation. After a few minutes, the General turned to Aleksandr and said, in flawless English:

"What do you think will happen in our relations with the United States, son?"

Oh, oh, thought Aleksandr. Here comes the test. It could be worse. The "son" meant that he had a passing grade, at least so far. He replied thoughtfully in his best English.

"I think we've reached a reasonably stable stalemate, General. I would imagine that the present balance could last indefinitely into the future, barring some horrible mistake on either side that could lead to conflict."

"Putting aside the possibility of a nuclear accident or other incredible blunder, what do you see as the gravest threat to the Soviet Union?"

Aleksandr shifted uneasily, listened to the cascading notes of Brahms' concerto, and decided to give a straightforward answer. He hoped that he had not had too much wine.

"There are two big problems as I see it. One—the clearest short-run danger—is the situation in Eastern Europe. I have a couple of friends at the Institute who come from Poland," he lied. In fact, one was from Prague and the other from Budapest, but why put them

even mildly in danger? "They say that the position of the Communist Party in Eastern Europe is quite different from that in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union, the Party is a central part of our society. It is a homegrown institution. To some of the reactionary elements in Eastern Europe, who seem quite numerous and influential, that is exactly the problem. The Communist Party is seen as a Russian institution. To put it in its strongest form, some even see their local parties as tools of Russian domination." Aleksandr thought that perhaps he had gone too far. "Of course, you know how young people can exaggerate after a few beers."

By now, the conversation between Katrina and her mother had stopped, and they were listening intently. Mme Kantarova was scowling slightly; Aleksandr was unsure whether it was in disapproval of what he was saying, or whether she was having difficulty following the English conversation. He was pretty sure that Katrina was having no trouble. She was very comfortable in English, and he thought that he had noticed her eyes widen ever so slightly when he lied about his friends being from Poland.

"At any rate, I wonder if the situation in Eastern Europe is as stable as it seems. And that does not even take into account what we might delicately call the German question.

"The other big problem is to the East." Aleksandr felt a sudden panic at how far he was going in expressing his opinions, and took another sip of wine. "China is a fraternal socialist state, but they have their own agenda. After all, they are a nation of over a billion people."

He stopped abruptly, leaving the others wondering if he had more to say. Kantarov was amazed that the young man had put his finger on his own two biggest concerns, though he was uncomfortable with the young man's frankness. He and his colleagues had been giving intense thought to China. The Chinese population pressures, right next to the underpopulated vastness of Siberia, played on the historic Russian fear of a new invasion of the *zolotaia orda*—the "golden horde" from the East, who had swept westward across Siberia under Ghengis Khan. When the KGB picked up reports of Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing, they had begun an intensive review of long-run

relations with China. When rumors of the Kissinger visit began to appear in the Western press, the study was intensified. As yet, however, *Pravda* and *Izvestia* made no mention of Kissinger's Beijing escapade. Kantarov wondered how much the young man actually knew.

"Have you been reading the Western newspapers, son?"

"Not recently, General," he answered truthfully. As a student of English, politics, and foreign affairs, he had easy access to British and American newspapers. In fact, he was expected to read them. But with his emotional turmoil of recent weeks and his upcoming exams, he had simply not had the time to look at newspapers, either from the West or from the Socialist countries. He was about to say something more, but he felt an awkward dissonance in the conversation. "Son" on the one side; "General" on the other. The conversation lapsed into another extended pause.

"I don't know if you have heard that Kissinger's just been to China."

"Really? No, sir."

"Frankly, we're worried about it. Nixon is such a slippery fellow. Rabidly anti-communist most of the time. But now it looks as though he may be trying to get together with China to gang up on the Soviet Union. The Western press is already gleefully speculating about how well Nixon will be able to 'Play the China card,' as they put it."

After a brief pause, Kantarov changed the subject.

"Katrina tells me that you are considering the foreign service when you graduate."

"I was, sir, but I'm having my doubts. My friends who are in the foreign service seem somewhat disappointed, because they are stuck in such unimportant and unchallenging jobs. In the past few months, I have almost given up the thought of the foreign service."

"What else do you have in mind?"

"I had thought of teaching, perhaps history or political science, but I'm not sure about that either. To tell you the truth, I have gone back to square one in the past several months, and am completely rethinking my future plans."

Another pause.

"I couldn't interest you in the KGB, could I? Intelligence is really quite interesting work, with not nearly so much of the dirty stuff as people think. For example, I've spent most of the last two months working on precisely the problem you identified—our long-run relations with China."

Aleksandr squirmed. "Well, I haven't made any decisions. But actually, I've been giving it some thought."

The glass slipped through Katrina's fingers. Aleksandr stared at the red wine seeping slowly through the white table cloth. He felt his spirits sinking away with the wine.

Katrina stood up abruptly, whisked the remaining glasses and candles off the table and into the kitchen, and rolled up the table cloth. She quickly stuffed the table cloth into the washing machine and pushed the buttons. As she turned half way round, Aleksandr could see the tears in her eyes. Her parents, sensing a crisis, had retreated to the living room. Aleksandr stood speechless at the kitchen door.

"Oh Sasha, how could you? Are you really like all the rest? Why didn't you tell me? Life is so full of lies; at least I want the truth from the man I love."

"It's not the way it seems." He was now drying the dishes as she washed. "I became disillusioned with the foreign service weeks before that evening at the *Merry Widow*. The KGB was one of the things I was considering. This all happened before I knew *anything* about your father. Then, when you told me about your reasons for leaving Moscow, I didn't know how to talk to you about my future. I was afraid I might lose you."

"You met me. You just happened to reconsider your future. You just happened to think of the KGB." Tears were now running freely down her cheeks.

"Please, Katrina. Let's not talk about it tonight. Let's wait until the morning. Let's not say anything now that we'll both regret."

Katrina dried her eyes. They walked slowly into the living room and rejoined her parents. Afterward, Aleksandr had no recollection of what the four had talked about. He could only remember that the TV was tuned to the New Year's eve celebrations in Red Square, with

the sound turned off so that they could talk. After about half an hour of aimless conversation, Katrina excused herself. She said she must have had too much to drink; she had a headache and was going to bed.

After another half hour, Aleksandr was too depressed to go on. The party in Red Square was just hitting its stride, but he had no desire to sit up to see the New Year in. As best he could, he made his excuses to Katrina's parents and headed down the hall. When he got to the end, the door of the bedroom on the right was half opened. He leaned in and flicked on the light. Apparently, it was the bedroom of Katrina's sister, with posters of teenage rock stars covering the walls. Aleksandr's bag was at the foot of the bed. He looked over his shoulder at the other bedroom. Its door was firmly closed. He turned back to his bedroom, slowly undressed and crawled into bed. He had said too much this evening, but not at all in the way he had feared. For the first time since he was ten, he had tears in his eyes as he fell asleep.

The next morning, everyone was late in rising. The plans for the day were to go sightseeing in Moscow in the afternoon, when activity would be returning to the streets following the celebrations of the night before. They had intended to have a quiet morning at home, for the four of them to sit lazily and chat. But following the tension of the previous night, Gen. Kantarov announced that he had pressing business to attend to, and disappeared into his study. Katrina's mother busied herself in the kitchen. Aleksandr went to the living room, and again began to browse through the newspapers, waiting for Katrina to join him.

After what seemed like an interminable ten minutes, she came into the living room, pulled up a chair opposite his seat on the sofa, sat down and put her hands in his. She was next to tears, and they sat there silently for another ten minutes before Aleksandr finally spoke.

"I think you know how much I have come to love you, Katrina. I would do anything to take back last night. But even if I had it to do over again, I don't know what I would do differently. I guess the best thing would have been to lie to your father, and say I hadn't even

thought of such a career, but the question came up so unexpectedly, I couldn't have done that without pausing. I'm sure you would have picked that up. I think you picked up that little white lie about my two friends being from Poland."

Aleksandr suddenly wondered if he should turn on the music, but he no longer cared.

"If I had lied then, it would have made it all the more difficult to tell the truth later." Katrina's grip on his hands were loosening perceptibly, but he went on. "The only choice open to me, if I didn't want to lose you, would have been to give up the thought of a career in the KGB. But frankly, I am not at all thrilled about my other options. The ambition I held for so many years—to join the foreign service—has turned to dust. After what I've heard from my brother's friends, I just can't see going through with it.

"Ever since that evening at the *Merry Widow*, I have not known what to do. I suppose I should have told you about my changing plans right away, during the intermission, so that it would be obvious I hadn't had time to make up a story and you would believe me. But there was so little time. I was so upset I didn't know what to do."

Katrina didn't know how she felt. She had of course noticed the fib about the Polish friends, but that didn't bother her. It was perfectly natural to lie to protect your friends. But to lie in a matter of love was another thing. Or was it? Perhaps, growing up surrounded by secrecy, misrepresentations, and lies, she had developed an irrational hope for the truth from her boy friends. Their lies had broken up more than one seemingly promising teenage romance. She didn't know whether to believe Aleksandr's story or not. It was plausible. It all seemed so calculated, however. If a clever fellow like Aleksandr was lying, that's the sort of plausible story he would tell.

After a few minutes, Katrina responded quietly, "I'm going to need some time. But let's not waste the weekend. I haven't seen my parents in months, and I want you to get to know them better."

If it had not been for the emotional cloud hanging over Aleksandr, the afternoon would have been delightful. The driver had the day off, and, at any rate, Kantarov wanted to drive himself so that the four of

them could talk more openly. His license plate entitled him to park just about anywhere he wanted, and his official pass got them whisked through almost any door. They were quickly ushered to the beginning of the line at Lenin's tomb. Aleksandr thought the body looked waxen, but he realized that he didn't know what a body preserved for half a century should look like. Then a quick tour of the Kremlin, and a brisk walk across Red Square, dodging the traffic, to GUM—prosaically translated, the People's General Store. Aleksandr noticed that they had split into two groups—the two women in one, and the General with him in the other. This split was to last the rest of the weekend, with Katrina talking intently with her mother, and Kantarov and Aleksandr chatting off and on.

In spite of the tension in the background, Kantarov was his relaxed, charming self. The two men spent most of the next two days surveying the world situation, picking up their earlier discussion of China, and wandering through East Asia, India, and Latin America. Aleksandr let the General lead the conversation, which never got back to Eastern Europe. He was both flattered and encouraged with the time the General was spending with him; perhaps it was a sign that things would work out between him and Katrina. As they were about to leave for the airport, Kantarov drew him aside for one last conversation:

"You have a brilliant future, my boy. You have better instincts and judgment on the world situation than most of my senior aides, who have been at the game for decades. I would strongly encourage you to join us. Even if things don't work out between you and Katrina, I want you to feel free to contact me if there is anything I can do to help you. Don't be inhibited by our difference in rank. After all," he said with a twinkle, "this is a classless society." With that, he handed Aleksandr a card with his private telephone number.

Oof, thought Aleksandr. "*If* things work out." And "my boy," not "son." He was grateful by the General's warmth and his invitation to further contacts, but this in no way made up for the wounds in his personal life.

There was little chance to talk on the plane back to Kiev. It was crowded, with that same sickly smell. The bus back to the campus

was also jammed. As they got off, Katrina said she was very tired. She didn't invite him up to her room.

In the following days, whenever Aleksandr telephoned her room, she always seemed to be busy. She was in the library. She was washing her hair. She was off in the computer lab. She was crashing on a deadline for a paper. And she didn't return his calls. To keep himself busy, he threw himself into his studies, taking two rather than just one course in electrical engineering. He still saw her occasionally, and whenever he did, his heart jumped. She remained friendly, but cool; there was none of that earlier vivacious spark. When he learned that she was transferring to Moscow University for her final year, he redoubled his efforts at his studies. He graduated near the top of his class, with a prize in history and political science and a solid minor in electrical engineering. He was actively recruited by the KGB, and quickly accepted; what did he have to lose now?

5

A Third-Rate Burglary

... a kingdom was lost,
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

Without Viet Nam, the President's men would not have wiretapped private phone lines.

Without the wiretapping, there would have been no Watergate break-in.

Without a casual communication from Lyndon Johnson to Richard Nixon, there would have been no tape recording system within the White House.

Without both the Watergate break-in and the White House tapes, there would have been no impeachment committee.

Richard Milhous Nixon would have retired in 1976 as an honored, if controversial, President.

Ted was gone for more than two hours at one of the early strategy sessions on Viet Nam in February 1969. As he came back from the meeting, I met him in the lower hall of the Executive Office Building and we went up together in the ancient elevator. He was grim but confident. "The President is determined to be out of Viet Nam by Christmas," he announced. "I don't know how, but we'll be out."

"I hope you're right. With all my heart, I hope you're right. But I don't see how we get from here to there." I couldn't see how we could wind things up quickly—unless we took Senator Aiken's suggestion, declared victory and withdrew, leaving the South Vietnamese to their fate. In a war of attrition, how can the impatient win a quick victory? Or any victory? Somehow, somewhere, we had forgotten the first rule of conflict: It's easier to get into a war than get out.

It was not long before frustrations mounted within the Administration. Shortly before the election, President Johnson had

announced a bombing halt, which was accompanied by the "understanding" that the Communists would launch no major attacks on cities in the South. For the first month in office, Nixon continued the bombing halt. In February, the Communists did launch a major offensive.

Nixon was disenchanted with Johnson's policy of gradual escalation. He was determined to be bolder and more unpredictable. He responded with B-52 bombing raids on bases in Cambodia that the Communists were using as sanctuaries from which to launch attacks on the South.

The trouble was, Cambodia was officially neutral, even if pockets were controlled and used by the Communists. Henry Kissinger was fearful of what he called "the dormant beast of public protest." To avoid arousing this distempered monster, Nixon began the bombing of the Cambodian sanctuaries in secret. Nixon and Kissinger also wanted to test diplomatic reactions. As the bombing began, they held their breath.

The silence was eerie. The Vietcong, the North Vietnamese, the Chinese, the Russians said nothing in public, making no effort to goad Kissinger's monster. In May, however, the front page of the *New York Times* carried a detailed story of the bombing. The *Times* reported its source: a senior official in the administration.

The President and Kissinger were furious. How could they pursue a vigorous, subtle, delicate strategy of disengagement if their decisions were leaked by disloyal colleagues near the top of their administration?

So began a fateful sequence of events. The President immediately summoned FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to the Oval Office. Hoover had a straightforward suggestion: use phone taps to identify the leaker.

The FBI moved quickly. By the evening of the *Times* story, Hoover already had a preliminary list of suspects. He did not yet have enough information for a firm conclusion, but the most likely culprit was Morton Halperin, one of Kissinger's own National Security Council staff. To make matters more uncomfortable for Henry, he had brought Halperin with him from Harvard over the objections of

Hoover, who had opposed Halperin's appointment on security grounds.

Although Mitchell signed the orders for the wiretaps, there was no court authorization. The administration had slid over the line into illegal wiretapping.

Soon, Cambodia was to become the saddest chapter of the Viet Nam tragedy. In early 1970, a coup overthrew Cambodian Prince Sihanouk, who fled to Beijing. He allied himself with the Communists, who became more firmly entrenched in Cambodia. They were now in a position to exert increasing pressure from their expanded sanctuaries.

In the face of this reversal, Nixon was determined to keep his eye on what he considered the only way out, short of surrender. He pushed on with his policy of Vietnamization—the orderly withdrawal of U.S. troops and a progressive turning over of combat roles to the South Vietnamese. He announced a withdrawal of 150,000 more American troops within the coming year. To prevent a shambles as the withdrawal took place, he felt he had to protect the Cambodian flank. Overruling objections by the Secretaries of State and Defense and Kissinger's severe reservations, the President went on TV to announce that he was sending American combat forces into Cambodia to "clean out the sanctuaries."

The result was an uproar. Interior Secretary Walter Hickel resigned, as did three of Kissinger's staff, including Anthony Lake—who was later to become President Clinton's Kissinger. Kissinger himself received bitter letters from old friends at Harvard, demanding that he resign forthwith. Colleges across the country erupted in protest and violence. At Kent State University in Ohio, the Army ROTC building was burned to the ground. Governor Rhodes called in the National Guard. Then tragedy struck. The tense, insecure, undisciplined national guardsmen broke under the taunts of outraged, abusive students. They reached the top of a hill, wheeled, and fired. Four students lay dead and nine wounded. Sadly, someone had forgotten the lesson of the Little Rock High School in 1957: When troops are used to maintain order in a volatile,

hate-filled domestic conflict, they should come with unloaded rifles. Bayonets are frightening enough.

The father of one of the dead students told a reporter, "My child was not a bum."

Nixon was utterly dejected. He had indeed decried campus "bums," but he had been referring specifically to radicals who bombed buildings. His comment had been widely misinterpreted as meaning all protesters were bums. He was not, however, to be diverted from his policies by public protests.

In his address to the nation, Nixon said that he was attacking the sanctuaries in Cambodia to prevent the United States from appearing a pitiful, helpless giant. He was equally determined that he would not go down in history as a pitiful, helpless president.

He was convinced that some of the most violent groups were receiving financial aid from foreign Communists. The trouble was, his intelligence agencies were utterly unable to provide evidence. J. Edgar Hoover was being uncooperative. Stung by a congressional investigation in 1966, Hoover had already canceled secret mail openings, break-ins or "black-bag" jobs, and the planting of bugs that required surreptitious entry. Over 200 such black-bag jobs had been carried out against violent domestic groups during the previous quarter century, including a break-in against the Ku Klux Klan in 1960 that had, according to the FBI, led to near disintegration of that organization. Later, as part of his "everybody-does-it" defense, Mr. Nixon wrote, with obvious relish, that one of the most enthusiastic promoters of domestic intelligence was none other than Lyndon Johnson's super-liberal Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, who arranged for informants in the Great Society poverty and legal services programs, and who pressured the Pentagon to greatly expand its domestic intelligence division.

Then, on May 25, the Weathermen issued a "Declaration of War," promising an imminent attack on a symbol of "Amerikan injustice." The threat was made good within 15 days, when a bomb exploded in New York City police headquarters.

In frustration, Nixon established a new interagency intelligence committee to develop a program to oppose revolutionary violence.

As the staff director, he chose an ambitious, articulate 29-year old, Tom Huston. Although Huston had initially been a speechwriter, he had a background in army intelligence and was soon venturing beyond speechwriting. As early as 1969, he had already tried—unsuccessfully—to use the IRS to probe the tax-exempt status of radical organizations.

Now Huston quickly worked up a plan to counter the Weathermen and other violent domestic groups. Its most noteworthy recommendation was that black-bag jobs be resumed. Huston recognized that this would be clearly illegal, but he justified break-ins as a way to get intelligence which was unavailable in any other fashion.

The Huston Plan was initially approved by the heads of three intelligence agencies—the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency—and by the President. It was scheduled to go into effect on Aug. 1, 1970. Hoover, however, objected that the risks of public exposure were too great, and he was supported by Attorney General Mitchell. The Huston Plan was shelved.

Another fateful step had, however, been taken toward Watergate. If black-bag jobs were resumed, they would no longer be undertaken by the FBI because of Hoover's objections. They would, instead, be directly under the control of the White House. More precisely, they would be undertaken by men speaking in the compelling name of the President, with little outside control at all. It would take only a few small nudges to push these men beyond black-bag jobs against terrorists and into activities against the President's political adversaries.

The Huston Plan was dead. As violence continued in the following months, however, the President mused more than once that he had perhaps made a mistake, that the plan might have prevented death and destruction. In August, a graduate student was killed when a bomb went off at the University of Wisconsin. In October, several bombs exploded at the University of Washington. In March, 1971, the Weather Underground detonated a bomb in the heart of Washington, in the U.S. Capitol building.

Meanwhile, the President received a message from Lyndon Johnson. When Johnson was President, he had had a tape recording system in the White House, and, as he worked on his memoirs, he was finding the tapes invaluable. (According to gossip, they were not invariably so. A secretary was utterly unable to unscramble a tape of the meeting where Johnson told Bobby Kennedy that he would not offer him the 1964 vice-presidential nomination. A technician concluded that Kennedy must have concealed a small scrambler as a precaution.)

When he came into office, Nixon had had the LBJ taping system removed. Now, looking ahead to his own place in history, he made the fateful decision to have all his conversations recorded. Johnson's system had been activated by buttons under the desk. Nixon's system, in contrast, switched on automatically whenever anyone was talking. Nixon did not have to do anything to turn it on or off. Soon he practically forgot it was there. Only a very few people were in on the secret—Nixon himself, H.R. Haldeman, his assistant Alexander Butterfield, and a few Secret Service technicians. Butterfield, it turned out, was one person too many.

Every young couple in love dreams that the sun will shine upon their wedding day, especially if the ceremony is out of doors. The wedding of Tricia Nixon and Ed Cox was scheduled for the Rose Garden at 4:15, Saturday, June 12, 1971. The day dawned cloudy, with drizzle expected to last through the late afternoon. But the gods shone upon the happy young couple, even though the sun did not. The rain stopped shortly after 4:00, the plastic covers were removed from the chairs, and the wedding began at 4:30. The reception was in the East Room, with Ed and Tricia leading off the dancing with "Lara's Theme" from Dr. Zhivago. The President then took his daughter's hand as the band played "Thank Heaven for Little Girls," the first time he had danced in the White House during his two-and-a-half years there. It was one of the happiest days of his life.

The drizzle was an omen of things to come. The next day, the President picked up his copy of the *New York Times*. In the top left of

the front page was a picture of him dancing with Tricia. On the right side was a three-column headline, *Viet Nam Archive: Pentagon Study Traces 3 Decades of Growing U.S. Involvement.*

At first, the Pentagon Papers seemed to pose little threat. In fact, the first installment ran only through 1968, highlighting Democratic responsibility for the war and the deceptions of President Johnson as he drew the United States deeper into the conflict. To Nixon, this helped place the responsibility where it belonged. Kennedy took the early, fateful steps to support South Viet Nam, anxious to restore the credibility of the United States after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Johnson plunged in deeper.

Now he, Nixon, had the delicate task of extricating the United States without a complete loss of the credibility that had so concerned Kennedy. He particularly resented the group of Democrats who, under Kennedy and Johnson, had led us into the Viet Nam morass in the first place, and now were vociferous antiwar critics. They had gotten the United States in, with no real strategy as to how we would win. Nixon had the infinitely tougher job of getting us out. He was being deprived of the maneuvering room needed for a skillful extrication by the liberal wing of the Democratic party, with their impassioned rhetoric. They had no appreciation of the feints and bluffs needed for a successful withdrawal. To make matters worse, the public debate was becoming so inflamed that there was little distinction between those who, quite reasonably and honorably, thought a quick withdrawal was a compelling U.S. interest, and those who, not quite so reasonably or honorably, positively wanted the Communists to win. Kissinger said, ominously, that we were in a "revolutionary" situation.

One of the antiwar critics, it soon turned out, was Daniel Ellsberg, the leaker of the top-secret Pentagon Papers. He fit the pattern so despised by the President. He had been an early, enthusiastic supporter of the South Vietnamese, going so far, Kissinger reported, as to take potshots at the Viet Cong from helicopters. Kissinger again had a problem: Ellsberg was considered one of his boys; he had come from Harvard.

According to Henry, Ellsberg was unstable and used drugs. But he was brilliant. Of that, there was no doubt. While still an undergraduate, he had accomplished a feat for which half the economists of America would give their right arm: he had published a paper in their most prestigious journal, *The American Economic Review*. It was a technical work on game theory, with a catchy title: *The Reluctant Duelist*. In his showdown with the President of the United States, Ellsberg would be anything but a reluctant duelist.

Ellsberg was convinced that, while talking of a withdrawal, Nixon wanted to expand and deepen the war. That justified his release of secret documents. In his duel with the President, he held the high ground. He had the ear, and the sympathy, of the press. While in hiding, pursued by the FBI for stealing secret documents, he was interviewed at length by CBS. His charge was blunt: "Americans bear major responsibility... for every death in combat in Indochina in the last twenty-five years." Quite an accusation, as 25 years would include the French fiasco at Dienbienphu. But details were unimportant. Public opinion was moving in a tidal wave against the war. For the first time, a Gallup poll reported a majority favoring a pullout, even at the risk of an eventual Communist takeover.

From retirement at his Texas ranch, President Johnson felt that it was hopeless to enter the debate; anything he said now would be used by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* to "re-execute" him. The "professors" who wrote the Pentagon Papers for the Defense Department had misinterpreted contingency plans as actual presidential decisions. To Haldeman, it seemed that Johnson had completely collapsed, was in a state of being totally unstrung, felt the country was lost, that the President couldn't rule.

Beleaguered, the President saw his ability to govern slipping away. How could he carry on a coherent, vigorous foreign policy if every midlevel official felt a higher calling, permitting the disclosure of secrets? He wondered what classified documents would come tumbling out next. He received a report, later found inaccurate, that there was a conspiracy to disclose classified documents, which included a former Defense Department employee at the Brookings

Institution. Suspicions of a conspiracy were deepened when one of Ellsberg's former colleagues at the Rand Corporation took the fifth. Shortly thereafter, the President was enraged to learn of a forthcoming Brookings study on Viet Nam, based in part on "executive branch documents." The director of the study: Daniel Ellsberg.

Even more disconcerting, the leaks were coming at a time of particularly delicate international negotiations. Kissinger was about to make his secret trip to China and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) with the Soviet Union were under way. The day before the United States was scheduled to present its formal SALT position to the Soviet Union, the *New York Times* carried a front-page report that, the President believed, undercut US negotiators by leaking the American fallback position. Now it was Kissinger who showed signs of becoming unglued, and the President was livid. He told—or ordered?—Bud Krogh, "We're not going to allow it. We just aren't going to allow it."

Krogh had already been put in charge of a new group set up to stop leaks, formally known as the Special Investigations Unit. It will go down in history as *The Plumbers*. In addition to Krogh, the plumbers included David Young of the National Security Council staff and Howard Hunt, a former CIA agent. Plus a fourth—one G. Gordon Liddy, a former FBI agent who, according to a colleague, "was a knight looking for a liege lord to serve." He consecrated himself to the cause of Richard Milhous Nixon.

The President gave his marching orders. He told Chuck Colson and H.R. Haldeman, in effect: I don't give a damn how it is done, do whatever has to be done to stop these leaks. I don't want excuses, I want results, whatever the cost. He had already suggested that "whatever the cost" might go beyond the law. When told that a report on the 1968 bombing pause in North Viet Nam was missing from the Pentagon, and the only remaining copy was at Brookings, he said, according to his own account, that he "wanted it back right now—*even if it meant having to get it surreptitiously*."

Henry II had uttered his fateful challenge: "Will nobody rid me of that meddlesome priest?" His zealous followers were off to murder Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In Nixon's White House, the line between plugging national security leaks and punishing their adversaries, if it ever existed, was quickly obliterated. The plumbers enthusiastically took over the campaign to discredit Daniel Ellsberg. It is not clear exactly how blackening Ellsberg's reputation would help to plug leaks—apart from any deterrent effect, and deterrence was being simultaneously pursued in the proper forum: the court case against Ellsberg. The difficulty had already been noted by Pat Buchanan, at that time a White House speechwriter. When approached to participate in Colson's earlier attempt to discredit Ellsberg, Buchanan demurred. A discrediting of Ellsberg might be good for the country, but it would not, argued Buchanan, be particularly helpful to the President.

Rebuffed by Buchanan, Colson turned to Hunt. His early efforts yielded very little. The President's men wanted to gather evidence that Ellsberg was emotionally unstable. They went to the FBI. Hoover was uncooperative, perhaps because he was a horse-racing crony of Ellsberg's father-in-law. Nevertheless, he did send FBI agents to see Dr. Lewis Fielding, Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Fielding of course refused to talk.

Rebuffed by Fielding, the President's men turned to the CIA for a psychological profile on Ellsberg. The CIA was not happy. It was illegal for them to spy on a U.S. citizen. When Young prevailed upon CIA Director Helms, invoking the names of Ehrlichman and Kissinger, Helms reluctantly agreed to provide a profile, using the sparse materials available. After considerable foot dragging, the CIA delivered a short, page-and-a-half report. It was not helpful, concluding that Ellsberg did not see anything treasonous in divulging the Pentagon Papers. Rather, he was responding to a higher order of patriotism.

Rebuffed by the CIA, the plumbers decided to do it themselves.

It was not a wise choice.

Hunt had already provided evidence that he was, perhaps, not cut out for this line of work. In his earlier incarnation as "Eduardo" of the CIA, he was the "mastermind" of the Bay of Pigs. When he attempted to tape an interview in the White House, he made the mistake of putting the recorder under a cushion. Colson sat on it.

Liddy also demonstrated his limitations. In attempting to recruit a secretary as a spy inside a Democratic candidate's office, he realized that he would have to calm her fears; she was afraid that, if confronted, she would confess the whole story. It was, he said reassuringly, a normal fear; but people could learn to keep their mouths shut. Nobody could get him to talk. To demonstrate his willpower, he held his hand over an open flame, looking calmly into her eyes as his hand burned. She suddenly remembered that she was getting married to a Swiss airline pilot and couldn't do the job.

Now Hunt and Liddy were off to California for a black-bag job to examine Ellsberg's files in Dr. Fielding's office. To do so, they needed money. Colson provided it indirectly from a committee with the Orwellian title, "People United for a Good Government."

Their first job was to case the place. One evening, they entered the building where Dr. Fielding had his office. They ran into the cleaning woman. When Hunt told her that they were doctors with an urgent message for Dr. Fielding, she obligingly unlocked his door. While Hunt distracted her with chitchat, Liddy took pictures with a camera concealed in a tobacco pouch. They concluded that it would be possible to pick the locks on the filing cabinets. They also noted that the cleaning woman left both the front and rear doors of the building unlocked when she left for the night.

They had, however, made a mistake. Before meeting the cleaning woman, Liddy had discarded his disguise. Because he might be traced, he was instructed not to participate in the actual break-in. That would be left to Cubans who had been recruited by the reincarnated "Eduardo" on a visit to Miami.

The evening of the break-in, two of the Cubans arrived, dressed as deliverymen. They had a case containing burglar tools, plastered with large labels addressed to Dr. Fielding. When they met a cleaner, he opened the door so that they could leave the case in Fielding's

office. On the way out, they unlocked the latch in order to get back in later.

The cleaner, however, discovered the unlocked door. He thereupon locked not only Fielding's office, but also all the building doors. Unable to get back in, the Cubans consulted Liddy, who was watching from the parking lot. (He had been expressly forbidden to take part in the operation. Was he really going to have an alibi that he wasn't there?) Liddy authorized a break-in through a window hidden behind a bush.

When they got out and back across the street to their hotel, the Cubans had some disconcerting news. Fielding's office was supposed to be unlocked, but it was not. They had to force their way in. Because the break-in would now be obvious, they decided to make it look like the work of a desperate drug addict, smashing furniture and scattering pills around. Then they carefully took pictures of their handiwork. So much for Ehrlichman's written authorization, that the job could go forward, but only if it would not be traceable.

And, oh yes. They found no file on Ellsberg. Following the visit by the FBI, had Dr. Fielding taken the precaution of removing it? Hunt and Liddy thought so, started to case Fielding's apartment, and recommended a second break-in. Krogh and Young went to Ehrlichman with the request. They finally got the answer: No.

The leaks, the schemes, the Byzantine intrigues continued apace in Nixon's Washington.

In the middle of the conflict between India and Pakistan, columnist Jack Anderson published a report of Kissinger's "tilt" toward Pakistan. Only a select few had access to the leaked report. Again the plumbers were put on the case.

This time they came through, with sensational results. Their investigation focused on a navy yeoman, who, it turned out, had traveled abroad as a secretary to Kissinger and had been regularly sending sensitive documents to Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The yeoman had rummaged through Kissinger's briefcase and burn bag, and the documents he sent back

to the Pentagon included the ultra sensitive report of the conversation between Kissinger and Chinese Premier Cho En-Lai. Nixon's veil of secrecy was now drawn tighter. Besides the President, only seven people—none in the Cabinet—were fully in on Viet Nam policy.

By now, Liddy and Hunt had been formally detached from the White House and were working for the Committee to Reelect the President (CRP, or "CREEP," as it came to be known), although they kept their White House passes and offices. Liddy's big moment had arrived. He began to draw up plans. As far as he was concerned, anything went. American civilization was at stake in the election. To permit the spirit and lifestyle of the Sixties to dominate the American way of life was as offensive to him "as was the thought of surrender to a Japanese soldier in 1945." They were at war. The Democrats were not simply political adversaries. They were enemies.

If this was war, normal rules did not apply. Liddy was under no illusion about the legality of his plan to sabotage the Democratic presidential campaign, Operation GEMSTONE. Among other things, it included the infiltration of spies into Democratic staffs, the procuring of call girls for sex-and-tell encounters at the Democratic convention, and surreptitious entries to plant bugs and photograph lists of Democratic donors.

In January 1972, Liddy got his chance to present GEMSTONE to a small group: Attorney General Mitchell, White House Counsel John Dean, and Jeb Magruder, the 32-year-old director of CREEP. Liddy went through his complex plan, complete with charts. Mitchell alternately fiddled with his pipe and puffed away. Liddy elaborated on details. To counteract antiwar demonstrations at the Republican convention, he planned to use professional killers to kidnap demonstration leaders and take them to Mexico, where they would be held until after the convention was over. At the Democratic convention, he would have his Cubans sabotage the air-conditioning. He had already acquired an option to lease a houseboat in Miami to which his hookers would lure their Democratic victims. His budget: $1 million.

Mitchell's response was not quite what Liddy had hoped for. Mitchell observed that a million dollars was a hell of a lot of money and asked him to come back with something more realistic.

Liddy was dejected but soon rebounded, going to work on a scaled-back, half-million-dollar plan. Again, it was presented to Mitchell and the small group in early February. Gone were the sabotage of air conditioning and the houseboat, but the call girls stayed. Specific bugging targets were discussed, including Larry O'Brien's office at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) at the Watergate.

Once more, Liddy left without obtaining approval. He was getting antsy. He had promised his recruits quick action, and, if nothing happened, they might fade away.

While he was impatiently waiting for the signal to "go," Liddy was not idle. Jack Anderson was again drawing his attention. After reporting Kissinger's "tilt" to Pakistan, Anderson went on to commit a sin that was, in Liddy's eyes, much more grievous. He published information that, Liddy believed, led to the death of a CIA agent abroad. The appropriate penalty for Anderson was death, and Liddy volunteered to play the role of executioner. He considered arranging a fatal automobile "accident," or having Anderson appear the victim of a street shooting.

Magruder had had more than enough. He wanted Liddy fired. Others, however, were concerned that if they got rid of Liddy, the intelligence operation would collapse. Liddy would stay. The last best chance to avert a disaster had been lost. It could have been worse. Liddy's overly imaginative assassination scheme was shut down, and Jack Anderson survived.

It was not the only one of Liddy's ideas to be shot down. Some weeks later, he planned a caper at a press conference scheduled for McGovern's hotel suite during the Democratic convention in Miami. He would hire a bunch of hippies to barge into the conference and have a pee-in on McGovern's carpet. Liddy's listeners roared with laughter. Except Mitchell:

"Dammit, Liddy, that's the same suite where I'm going to stay during the Republican convention."

Liddy did, however, finally receive approval for a scaled-back, quarter million dollar version of GEMSTONE, including a break-in at Larry O'Brien's offices at Watergate.

As in the Ellsberg break-in, it was not clear what could possibly be gained that would justify the risks. The Democrats were already well on their way to making one of Nixon's fondest dreams come true; they were about to nominate George McGovern. Barring an unforeseen catastrophe, Nixon should win in a walk. And what was the point of breaking into O'Brien's office, anyhow? Apparently, they were less concerned to get something on him than to find out what dirt he had accumulated on them.

The plan was to begin the evening with a dinner in the Continental room in the basement of the Watergate. When they received word that the DNC offices were dark, they would leave the restaurant by a corridor that also led to the office stairwell. They would climb up to the sixth floor and pick the lock on the DNC office door.

When the big evening arrived, however, things did not go quite according to plan. When the restaurant was closing down at 10:30, they were told they had to leave. They still had not heard from the lookout that the DNC was dark. When the lights in the restaurant went off, they took the opportunity to scramble into a closet. The staff left the restaurant, locking the main door.

The trouble was, they still had not heard that the coast was clear at the DNC by 11:00, when the alarm in the corridor was scheduled to be turned on. With the exit through the corridor blocked, they tried to get out through the main door but couldn't pick the lock. They were trapped and spent the night uncomfortably in the closet.

The next night, Saturday, they tried again. This time, they simply signed in under aliases at the reception desk at the office building. Again they failed. They couldn't pick the lock to the DNC office.

Liddy was now exasperated. He didn't want to go back to Magruder on Monday morning and admit failure. They would have to do it right the next night, Sunday. To prevent another fiasco, Liddy sent one of the Cubans to Miami to get proper burglar tools.

That evening, they went in through the Watergate garage, taping the stairwell door. With the new tools, they got into the DNC. They took pictures. They didn't get into Larry O'Brien's office, but one of the two bugs they placed was on a small switchboard with O'Brien's name. They celebrated their success, although they had had one close call. One of the burglars was caught by a guard and booted out of the building. They were in luck, however: the guard failed to call the police.

Their celebration was premature. The bug on O'Brien's line didn't work and they got precious little from the other. Even what they got, they couldn't tape record; the receiver and the tape recorder didn't match. They had to use headphones instead.

This scarcely justified the quarter million dollar budget, and the decision was made to go back once more. McCord—who had been hired as the security director of CREEP and was unwisely involved directly in the break-in—taped open the door between the garage and the stairwell.

Shortly thereafter, McCord and two of the Cubans—Martinez and Barker—left the lookout room to carry out the actual burglary. They were back in few minutes. The tape on door was gone. Should they go on? What if the tape had been removed by a guard? Perhaps it had been a postal employee; there were mailbags nearby.

The decision was made to press on. They went back through the basement. Somebody made the mistake of retaping the door. The night watchman found the retaped lock and called the police.

At the lookout room at the Howard Johnson Motor Lodge across Virginia Avenue, Liddy heard a whisper through his walkie-talkie: "They got us."

Watergate could have turned out differently. In this novel, it does. The story is told by a presidential aide who becomes entangled in a web of bribery, blackmail, arson and espionage. The result: The 38th president is not Gerry Ford.

The 38th President