

Kerens-*h*-tein

Anthony DeMarco

for

Pietro Gambino and Daisy Macaluso

my grandparents

Sharon Kerenstein must have stood for forty minutes or more contemplating some flagrant misdeed perpetuated by one misspoken office clerk. In someone else's dream they had become entwined unwillingly. Mistaken for another and uttered forth unknowingly ultimately harked back to her own modest undertaking, some carried insignificance to all but she who might take the time to stop and consider. Stop and ponder some ruder awakening, blinder omission of one faded character brought over so hopefully and with no rancor held toward those who had forced upon, involuntary untruth resounding well into the better part of this once unfulfilled sea of burgeoning promise alluring. Still blinder flirtations would have always entranced this slighter furtherest generation – Kerens-*h*-tein – and still further removed toward anything else she might have hoped to become. Some widening silk pulled higher until Sharon could withhold no more. One's own mind heading back and around to that point which brought her on to this ever increasing oceanic embrace would still this mighty point of reason from which some new world undertaking had departed. Unnecessary trappings of a time gone so soothingly, time obscured through the advancement of one not-so-foolish undertaking and out of some sea of translucent blue wet and wetter still until emerging in sleeker desire and object lesson to all that one's own tired mind could produce inevitably. Back to that one faded character would continue to beckon Sharon Kerenstein to all but that most indelible of scholarship remaining. Hours and hours of poring over one sharpened page after another, modernized reprinting of older versions, documents drawn up and out of some archive long revered might have provided some island sitting in deference to the grand lady reaping out a shadow of hope over the tired many, and still lost amidst piles of yellowed records defining the stench over which beckoned some brightest new endeavor. Kerens-*h*-tein forgotten. Kerens-*h*-tein begotten and sub-rendered. And so Sharon would continue with her noble undertaking, ne'er hesitating until one well thought-out time displacement might soon have its way with her. Pushing back against some finer notion of what it should have promised to be at the heart of one's own all encompassing civilization, and brought back to a time and place so distant that one could only gasp in harrowed anticipation of what it might promise to lay down before some figure awaitingly. Longing pathetically and all too willing to tempt the very hand which had first brought her over into this everlasting feast, time and time again inconsolably.

Sharon Kerenstein had never pretended to be some genealogical scholar. Quite the contrary, she had always held on firmly to her own academic inclinations, steadfast in her refusal to be waylaid by any such inconsequential foreplay. Her great-grandparents had emigrated at a relatively advanced age, and notwithstanding such stories of so-and-so who had departed with little more than the merest childish recollection of gathering pebbles beneath one dusty edifice, peering discerningly down some stone path did little to comfort Sharon in the knowledge that hers was a forbearance far more prepared for the slings which were to be borne. Minsk had by that time become a place enshrouded in some unmistakable misaccountability, what with everyone for no-one and then looking about for some uncertain satisfaction disheartedly. Some pig's knuckles repast might send one off to bed beneath some last glimmer of exhausted expectation renewed. True, the sun would always rise on the morrow, ridden with soot and sorrowed past this present loss of initiative resignedly, some greater stride over to that engine of industry would tempt, and oh so seductively drawing Sharon to gaze back toward some finer circumstance, bolder initiative which

was to sow its seed upon her very own. Warmed in slighted puddles upon one's own budding sense of time and place could leave no room for any such tide of wont and regret. Had there been some reason preordained for such a swift change? Meager correction or finer betterment still? Had it meant anything at all? Or did it simply play upon the moistened remains of one's own passing fancy?

Distant and not far off sounds of carnival in full fare now became encompassing to Sharon. It was not by chance that she had chosen such a venue within which to practice her profession, with teaching alongside some whitened rockaway beach given way to those more treasured reminiscences of her youth. Upon one particular temptation, some sanded beach 116th Street approach would always make for those finer afternoon preludes, salt-filled endeavors complicating her once insipid girlish void all too often and none at once challenging. Sharon began to acquire the best that she could possibly conjure, benign enchantment foretelling as other tasks had placed some more noble commitment upon her. Whirling noises colliding with one out-of-tune calliope and calling out to some little boy in mid-delight, lazy sun struggling through this leftover morning island haze in gentler promise of one's fuller day length infantile joy and innocence would still impinge on those who had left their hearts and minds adrift. Innocence framed within that last ill-fated character – *Kerens-h-tein* – would echo that which Sharon had nurtured within for all those years, only now struggling to emerge and standing stoically in kinder embrace. Some gentlest consolation would lead affectionately toward one's own affliction brought forth, teasing time along the way and unbending toward that very life circumstance which had so appeared so unforgivingly. Some prolonged rightward tilt would once again point Sharon's gaze aloft, one rising wheel come round, then back down as the carnival continued its hackneyed call and consent. One, two, three ...one, two, three ...until Sharon could truly withstand this melancholic menagerie no more.

The list she had uncovered on that one graying saturday afternoon was much lengthier than she could have imagined. Alphabetical and remindingly of just one above, some straight-edged monotony peering downward in fiercer inspection and drawing nearer to that margin beneath made for some still furthest moistened recline in her thinking. Some later lunch hour surrender to one's innermost necessities would lead on to the next smallest imprint – *Alexei, Albert, Andros, Androky* – surname unchanged throughout moments of time passing but not. Some ne'er changing portrait upon which might bear the fruit of one's own more casual scholarship, devoid of even some meagerest remuneration set squarely upon this one graying saturday afternoon and would have belittled even that smallest of better intention. How very kind she had thought that the chief archivist should bow to her hastened request! This and more so upon some blither reflection of just how important was one's regeneration amidst some busier work week celebration, still sitting for the next three hours in determined effort of one more singular fixation upon names brought over but altered insensibly. Some hastier passing on and masses awaiting one's own briefest inoculation crying out to the loved ones who had managed to slip on ahead in mid-rejoice, only to be turned back upon some sullener realization. Medical records in simplest fabrication until time would yield no more took on some even more urgent significance when Sharon's forbearer could no longer proceed and detained insurmountably while undergoing one's worst underided nightmare. Just those characters which one calls one's own, individual identities prizedly and would take on no slightest importance for the day clerk hitherto disregarded. Personal histories set aback upon one faded omission – *Kerens-h-tein* – and for which some poor soul might have begotten Sharon from within one's own virgin birth unattendedly. Never having found precisely what it was she had been seeking on

that day, Sharon set upon with some more determined effort. Softer images shimmering beneath some more veiled offering had nevertheless been her truest calling, and the blander appearance which she so often rendered was none to match some milkier determination with which she occasionally gave forth. For Sharon had, indeed, become resolute in her decision to re-visit the old continent. Carnival sounds now reappeared, and she arched back even further to perceive some missing thread snapping high above, some graying wisp manufactured by one's own generational tradesmen fascinating and would become ever more appreciated within this newer regime. Thrown into some more lilting rhythm remindingly...one, two, three...one, two... and just for the fun of it. Cotton candy reminders and staring aloft at some tastier attraction would make for those pleasanter sensations and with calling out for one more go of it – first prize, second prize – caught unawares at just how quickly one's time had transpired. Sharon glanced down at her watch in total disregard, festive air yet reminding of some more positive task still to pursue. The fifth period bell would be sounding shortly. Presiding over one final language lesson would bring in some much awaited summertime sojourn, some foreign syntax and having endured beyond that point of threatening to become Sharon's least beloved resource. Alas, she was never to reclaim her rightful character on that graying Saturday afternoon, and alone on some island sitting in deference to the grand lady would present Sharon her one last waking aspiration.

By the time Sharon returned, her classroom was in disarray. Some ninth-grade class grown impatient and decidedly upon taking things into their own hands could never be too little cause for concern. The noise level was beginning to surpass anything the vice-principal would tolerate and Sharon might be hard pressed to explain such an interval, absentminded spendings along the course of this final day's schedule. The rest had appointed McInerney to initiate some regular routine homework review – *pedí, pediste, pidió, pidieron, pedimos* – and with little success. Some alabastered insignificance playing off the better part of one's suddenly come across later day relax, and fairer skinned adolescent girls in partial retreat from their overly ambitious mate would typify this Saint Mary's School for Catholic Girls. Sharon had spent the better part of ten years here teaching *fr*-ench and *s*-panish, with ne'er escaping the irony in one such indelible Jewish tradition having been contracted and retained for so long. Other faiths were never to be slighted. Quite to the contrary, some inexhaustible opening up should have been and always will, righteous diversification in the eyes of a just lord would cry out to all those poorer souls to whom we speak beneath some slighter, more patronizing gesture. Sharon thrived within her well-found niche, and only some stone throw from where she had herself grown up, relishing in the notion that she had ne'er once departed and making it a point to develop herself continually. Painting over with deeper shades of meaning, attempting to define one's own place within this near century-old retreat across some vaster ocean would still give added depth to her somewhat stationary demeanor, while imbibing on those more saliferous sensations which could have never ceased providing her with some most rapturous life blood. Harping upon some inability to exist much further than one dampened ether could extend would become her mantra, some moistened blanket within which to re-negotiate one's own personal writhe and temptation.

- Let's all quiet down, please.
- These immature ducklings won't listen to me.
- Thank you, Miss McInerney. I'll take it from here.

Sharon would persist in drawing upon some good nature ne'er looked down upon. Circumstance irregardless had always extolled her in some finer fashion, untold elegance towering out and over even in the most difficult of situations. Some professional grace more finely written with each passing day, Sharon Kerenstein certainly did pertain to that highest of callings and higher still.

- And where have *you* been, Ms. Kerenstein?

Peggy Dooley would have surely been the first to confront Sharon regarding some better-natured misdeed, unintended concessions unpardoned, some purely accidental misuse of time. As it were precisely she whose general manner most went lacking, drawn out and up over some working regale within which her blessed parents had long been struggling. Then, the Saint Mary's School had long held some certain permanence within this working class section in the borough of Queens, New York. Some fainter redistricting, postal code and decidedly irish upbringing would have characterized this once unimposing piece of shoreline. From some vaster lot they had appeared, years after that of Sharon's own but still much sooner than the Dooleys could have intended and all at once rising daily under some starker realization that this new world had presented its own variety of loftier endeavor. Ne'er quite being able to make ends meet had exhausted until one's own expectant loins might have given in to some pleasanter distraction. Peggy Dooley had thus appeared within some midst unset upon, unsought and completely without any means for some sounder fruition. Hardly knowing and never being made aware of some purest chance which had somewhat cruelly obliged her to look forwards, ne'er unquestioning and would provoke all who taught her to retreat beneath some finer familiar rapport and tolerantly. Poor Peggy this and poor Peggy that would have hardly sufficed but underlie even some tiniest bit of unbridled concern.

- I was just on the boardwalk. I guess I kinda' lost track of the time.
- Jill's been tryin' to tell us that there're only *tildes* on the first 'n' third persons for this verb.
- This one? *Pedir*?
- Yes.
- She's absolutely correct... Come on, group. You should all know that!

Jill McInerney returned to her seat feeling well-vindicated and wondering if there might have been some other matter for which Peggy had been secretly harboring ill will towards her on that day. After all, clutching at grammatical straws would never suit Peggy Dooley, even if *tilde* had always seemed such a pleasant word to say, reluctant scholar and all she would be able to do in graduating with enough merit to take over in running the family store.

- We spoke at length about why and where they're placed. As long as you can understand them, there isn't any reason to memorize when you do and when you don't.

Sharon would not often drift from her lesson plan for the day. But upon some other course so sympathetically chosen and nearing final examinations, she saw no reason not to bend to the practicality which had, after all, come to define just what it was we were all to be about.

- Let's review that rule so that if you get stuck next week you can just figure it out. Can anyone explain it to the class?
- It had something to do with natural accents.
- Yes, it did. Where is the natural accent when a word ends in a vowel?
- On the next-to-last syllable.
- Right! Can anyone name other cases like that?
- When words end in *n* or *s*.
- Okay... Now, would this be correctly or incorrectly written?

Sharon turned toward the blackboard. She carefully wrote a word and placing a mark cheekily over the next-to-last syllable. Unnecessary, and then in some attempt to make it all simpler somehow, keener distraction to whom it might have all been. Pronunciation set back to some more complicated verse and thinking all the while in those softer moments, tenderer satisfactions clouding over one's ability to choose well. Turn-of-the-century mutterings would have made for some easier lack of sounder concentration with one inconsequential character presumed missing or misassigned, and presumably for the better! Could Sharon's own exercise have been more telling of some long-achieved historical misappropriation? Might she not have been just as guilty in forsaking some long-held belief, one's own tendency toward some simplest form of self-expression?

- It's incorrect, Ms. Kerenstein.
- Why, Sheila?
- Because the word ends in a vowel ...
- ... and so it's unnecessary!

On the final verdict, the class chimed in chorus. *Unnecessary*. Whether mockingly or in some wholehearted belief that Sheila could not really do adequate justice to Sharon's sincerest intentions, classroom protocol had once again become moot. And Ms. Kerenstein would convince herself, rest assuredly that hers had and would always have been to that more properly constructed, pedagogical mind defeat never to be so employed out of some more well thought-out sense of verbal abuse. Kerens-*h*-tein had certainly been unduly sacrificed, and for what purpose? Some living about, fairer-minded but harsher sense of reality. Coveted yet spurned, seekingly and

more so until they would become just memories, yellowed blotches of ancient script falling like raindrops upon the gills of one more graying Saturday afternoon. Without necessity to they who had perhaps been denied the valor of some such hurried redirection, oceanic embrace overjoyed and held so dear or spurned by some such superfluousness. Some unidentified inclination toward certain death frightened but then encouragingly and onto this holiest of exercises. Generational nurturing of some seed sown within and for no good reason, other than that of one wholesale salvation of this ne'er flourishing race. Some sanded beach 116th Street fantasy sought after and further still, years passing with ne'er a whisper's breath holding one back from achieving all to which some long ago abandonment had once given promise. Still, the thought that it *was* unnecessary had begun to lend some realer consideration to Sharon. Some finer leaning forth and better perfumed illumination of that perseverance, common sense living along and toward one healthier renunciation of some overly wrought insignificance. Kerens-*h*-tein ... but then the evening bell had signalled the end of someone else's turn, phrases shifted beneath the burden of some more hurried task. This is just as it might have occurred, thought Sharon, some quicker re-positioning of one torn first encounter held strife to one's even more overwhelming sense of daily routine. Without even the least bit of malice intended, and unknowing wholly of some more precarious history which it were to usher in.

- Very good, girls. I'm sure you'll all do very well on next week's exam.
- With such a good teacher, why shouldn't we?
- Well, you're very good students and I'm sure I'll miss you all next year.
- Just next year?
- And the rest, of course.

Sharon had never had any doubt about what it was she would do with her life. Having graduated in the top third of her class, Sharon's studies had always provided some reasonable means for a more prolonged, easier achievement and having shunned those more lucrative imaginings that her family had tried to instil. Never once forsaking urgently, some higher devotion would continue to tease Sharon until well into the better portion of her middle-age and hopefully beyond. Looking backward and revelling in the vaster quantity of needier spirits tended to, some future bedecked with one's own shining sense of compassion and generosity might ne'er once have led on repentantly. Some moaning misambition would beset others, yet upon them she might yearn soothingly within her own gentler academic aspiration, unpityingly understood and always given forth in some kinder way. Upon catching the lexington avenue northbound might lead her astray for just a moment, catching herself in time and beginning diligently through some aging professorship squandered – though lexington had always been theirs – and would eventually school her in those pedagogical tools which were to become hers alone. Some gilded wand held out to the jaded class in strictest remuneration for all the joy which they had bestowed upon her unintendedly. With one eye on her heritage and the other on some birthright as yet unfulfilled, Sharon's promise would fall into step with those who might have ever had an occasion to become one with her. Now having found herself squarely at a crossroads, she would be about to fold

this Saint Mary's School fondly into the coveted linen which sheltered her most untimely embark. Makingly of some dreamier record, still youthful considerations had let her onto the notion that some continental undertaking might quiet her heaving anticipation. Intellectual yearnings going over amongst ties emotionally could not quite certain her desire to engage in one most important reconciliation and had led Sharon to consider embarking soon upon what had always been some long-cherished journey. Arriving back to that place and time in some attempt to speculate about who we are and where we should be going. Haphazard events would depress Sharon – Kerens-h-tein – as much as anyone, and so she decided that leaving that which had long become her most beloved, to seek out some more ethereal explanation of why some lingering differential might present itself in the way it had, would be the proper thing to do. She had considered that even those tenets of human behavior so crucial to some pre-ordained coexistence unfettered, unconditional and might turn out to be quite similar should it necessarily become called upon to defer. Two separate continental spheres, old and new within some perfect step and this she had surely considered. People and places, characters and temperaments marching on would prove to be some purely parallel homogeny. Still, it would have all been worthwhile, and when her own progeny and more so were to one day ask as to the betterment of this once elusively divided race, religion against religion and falling easily upon Sharon, she might close her eyes in one final dream sleep awakening of all she had left and tried to do.

- Why're you leaving St. Mary's, Ms. Kerenstein?
- I'm going to Europe.
- To Europe?
- That's right.
- When?
- I'm hoping to go in a couple of weeks.
- For good?
- Well, it's always hard to say. But I'd like to stay for at least a year.

An odd silence fell over the class just as Sharon was beginning to warm to the idea of being more forthcoming.

- Any more questions?
- Where're you going?
- I know, interrupted Sheila, Spain or France.
- Now, why would you say that?
- 'Cause you speak Spanish and French.

Sharon laughed.

- You're a good detective. Actually, I'm going to Madrid.
- What're you goin' to do over there?
- Good question! But I'll be sure and send postcards whenever I can to keep all of you informed.
- Maybe you'll be back here someday, said McInerney.
- Well, after Madrid I hopefully won't be coming back to Queens just yet.
- Are you going on some kinda' tour?
- Something like that.
- So where are you goin' after that, Ms. Kerenstein?
- I'll try and go to Russia. Has anyone ever been to Russia?

The class was starting to appear quite dumbfounded by now. Sharon would not be able to go on baiting them forever, and she would have felt decidedly disappointed upon not being able to calm some still lingering need for furtherest *cotilleo*.

- Isn't it *freezing* in Russia, Ms. Kerenstein?
- That's what they say, Peggy, but I've never been there. It'd certainly be quite a change coming from Spain though, wouldn't it?

Sharon was beginning to lead her class onto some slower motion adolescent reflection, upon some more calculated vision and one-after-the-other opening up to some newer and more constant sense of self-awareness. What it was exactly that they might ever wish to achieve would hold her imagination at bay throughout the ages, and never would they be further away than some merest whisper given forth affectionately, one faintest recollection settled sweetly upon some ever more increasingly distasteful daily state of haste.

- Why do ya' wanna visit Russia?
- Well, my great grandparents were from there, and I'd like to see where they came from.
- My great grandparents were from....
- ...Ireland, blurted out Sheila.
- That's right, said Sharon turning back toward the class. We're all children or grandchildren of immigrants, aren't we?

- Didn't you say you were Jewish, Ms. Kerenstein?
- Yes, I am, but Jewish descendants could have been from a lot of different places.
- I didn't know you were Jewish, exclaimed Peggy.
- She told us at the beginning of the year. Can't you remember anything? scolded Sheila.

Her impatience with Peggy Dooley would resurface amidst some oft recurring inability to think in a forward way, one's own whining insistence on some ill-focused disregard for that which is or had already been spoken or discussed. There would thus always be certain students forever marginalized by their peers, within their own circles and slighted upon. Befriended out of some sheerer necessity and with ne'er some slightest bent to one's own more heartfelt show of affection, Peggy Dooley would never represent the least of such.

- Besides, continued Sheila, her name is Keren-*STEIN*... Get it?
- Oh, stop the teasing! Actually, the name probably wasn't Kerenstein when my great grandparents arrived at the turn of the century...
- ...that's *last* century, Peggy!

It was no use. The class laughed, but Sharon had now been more inclined to throw some sterner glance toward Sheila, and making it implicitly clear that some more middle-aged rising above and putting things into order should be called for. When the class had again settled down, she resumed.

- I found out that the name might've actually been Kerens-*h*-tein.
- How do you know that?
- Well, I checked some old birth records from the city they came from...
- ...in Russia?
- That's right. You can do that sort of thing pretty easily.
- Why is *your* name different, Ms. Kerenstein?
- Very often, when immigrants arrived to Ellis Island – do you all know where that is...?

All at once, the class broke into some frenzied attempt to reassure Sharon. Alas, poor Ms. Kerenstein could hardly find a place to get a word in.

- Isn't that the Statue of Liberty?

- It *can't* be the ...
- It's just in front of New Jersey and ...
- ...you can see it from the Staten Island Ferry.
- How do *you* know about the Staten Island Ferry? inquired McInerney.
- Her cousin lives there ...
- ...on Ellis Island?
- No, smarty. On *Staten* Island. Her parents moved there when her little brother was born.
- Why?
- The house was too small, or...
- I'll bet they don't have a great beach like ...
- ...Okay, okay. Please, girls!

Sharon would be quick to return the class to some order.

- Ellis Island sits just off to one side of Liberty Island. You can imagine the quantity of people passing through there everyday. Personal information was always recorded by hand, and mistakes were often made. Most times, the officers spoke other languages poorly or not at all, and this would've often led to some confusion. Or maybe they were simply too tired and overworked to write clearly...
- ...like Peggy on an exam.
- That's cruel, Sharon scolded.
- Why don't ya' go there to check for yourself, Ms. Kerenstein?
- I did. I went there in person and was given permission to have a look in the archives.
- Did ya' find the name?
- No. As a matter of fact, I couldn't find any record of my great grandparents at all! I found many Kerensteins and Kerens-*h*-teins, but none with my great grandparents' first name.
- Maybe they never *came* at all! exclaimed Sheila.

– Then how on earth did *I* get here to be able to teach all of you wonderful students?

This the class pondered for a couple of seconds, but more so anxious to finish off for the day and would have made for just one more period marking of the end of regular classes. Some summertime went beckoning evermore assuredly in this seaside village in the borough of Queens, and there would be none-too-many arrangements to be made before any of it could come down cleanly into one's own more well prepared, better feeling. Picking up after herself would be pleasant enough for Sharon, although saying goodbye had cost her more than she could have imagined. The class, too, had sensed that time might allow for so little within the course of one's own life discourse. Words spoken too few would always be paramount for the likes of McInerney, and trying to find that time and space into which more might endure would never cease providing some gnawing sense of futility to which we all inevitably become some closest lifelong companion. In due time, Sharon stepped back out onto the boardwalk and into the sunshine for which she had been hoping earlier, some warnened reminder of just how fortunate she had been for so many years. She could scarcely recall that day when she had inquired into some readily acquired situation at Saint Mary's. No-one could have ever pondered some such school so leadingly onto the rustle of this ephemerally chastened beachfront. Stepping directly from some eastward corridor and directly onto the boardwalk would have surely granted pleasure to those willing enough to lie back into the background of this eternally moistened landscape, veritable banquet of sea and sand. Upon the sounding of the final bell, some disinterested bystanders from afar would be bemused to have the opportunity of tracing the path of one prettier young girl gliding chaotically through the throng. Some seething youth migrating outward toward one's final day rejoice would now have Sharon negotiating her most privied path. Some two hundred feet remaining and in approximate parallel to that which had met with her most ardent lifelong embrace. Then turning the corner and led her back onto some sanded beach 116th Street, more determined than ever to sift through the trappings of those who had endowed her with all to which she could have ever hoped to aspire.

- II -

*...hacia belén
va a una burra
rin, rin
yo me remendaba
yo me remendé
yo me eché un remiendo
yo me lo quité
cargada de chocolate*

Sharon passed quickly by the church which might have become some more righteous passage into one, some more drawn out life endeavor and presenting itself inappropriately as this latest in century-old common sense. Continuing to put forth unashamedly within some newer, more modern time and place had survived even that lengthiest of journeys. One's own transcendent aberration upon those ancient superstitions ill-shed, and would promise to soothe over this aching inquietude naturally occurring, some sullener realization that one's own life expanse had indeed been given some new added breadth. Some religious service placating the voices of those lingering behind, and one well-tuned chorus resonantly might have provoked her to stop and listen. Beneath some steeple ne'er supine, and above some quieter children's strains could scarcely be heard this fiercer tone penetration more piercingly through one dampened street. Sharon had arrived in Madrid at the beginning of July, and struggling to sustain some previously conceived notion that language classes could be sufficiently given at that time. She was well disappointed to learn that hardly anyone would take an interest in language study during such heated hours, and she languished on patiently through the waning days with drawing upon resources brought over from home and would await patiently some more proper *s*-panish appetite for language study unbelated. Now some cooler winter determination had set in, and with sounds all too reminiscent of any such kind, sudden incidental slumber. Setting carols about and gently treading upon one thinnest cap of crystalline frost would continue to be amongst her most prized possessions, precarious and placed unpromisingly upon one whitely sanded still. Sharon cannot have achieved much more than some early adolescence when she took up singing at the synagogue during Hanukkah festivities. At one time, she had even considered making music some well-deserved career and with going on further into those melodies, counterpoints ill-conceived and still hoping to perish upon one last tone intonation. Now hearing some *s*-panish *villancico* just in passing and would produce this loneliest reminiscence, some dormant beach imagination hintingly of the regret she might be made to endure forever. Some fairest throughout and awaiting that continuing circle which would mark clearly the stations away from those staid planifications from which we all tend to shy.

*... yo me remendaba
yo me remendé
yo me eché un remiendo
yo me lo quité
cargada de chocolate*

One more verse went fading on as she neared the precipice of not knowing what to do next, where to be and within this wholly consuming life incorporation. Some unbearable piece of chance having had once taken hold, as in some other symbol dispossessed – Kerens-*h*-tein – and would tend to lose all but that most steadfast of chaos. Holding one captive amidst this never ending mosaic configuration, and seeing suddenly some alter-ego characterization put forth at precisely that time and place would succeed in spotting vainer recognitions, tempting sufficiently (or so one would hope). Sending one back along to that reckoning of their own proper birth, too long set adrift and trying hard not to regret the fortitude which one had had to muster in seeking one's way back. Lacking in some genealogical erudition all the more would go on enticingly – Kerens-*h*-tein – and still bent on achieving that most sacred of challenges outright. Now Sharon was approaching the hostel to which she had been directed and was just up the street. It had been serving as some more-than-welcome

retreat, some more-than-welcome conjugation to that which she could no longer caress, no longer feel and not wishing to hold on any longer to the inane presumption that all would be well. Some generational drift had made for this ever-increasing mind complication, some simplicity confounded and would confront non-specifically one's own sense of purpose uncluttered, disappearing slowly upon decades and decades of some inconsequential year-upon-year. Soul unsettling in its trajectory and more-than-slight undertakings cooling over each preceding generational harvest would have borne out McInerney's explanation as having had been frightfully candid, some peer inspired unwillingness and would have contributed to their own very sense of unlearning. Deconstruction had been all that Sharon could perceive, and for this she might have been inclined to return to some more initial sense, guilt-free reduction pointing back to the place where one's own seed had been sown, one's own spiritual journey begun. Some correction might perhaps be afforded in some other universe, but ne'er in this. One should always look backward for the proper sense, she reasoned, for this might provide some more correct manner of proceeding in the present. Not doing so would be only to admit to some more transparent veil of non-existence, arbitrary self-consuming mind goings-over for which some unforgiving roll of the dice were to mark and relegate.

Sharon had quickly become accustomed to this wholly inconsequential fleetingness, history unrequited and never revealed. Swimming out into some open sea, searching out they who had tossed her onto this earth-worn beaten-down existence in the first place. Shedding all but some sheerest of feigning still, shadowings throughout some bodily existence would move her through some warmer fluidity, wettest and gliding freely upon one's own more prurient understanding. Finally arriving to that furthest point of sea swept isolation, and revelling in the notion that it were she who would pass on easily into one's own most coveted dream sleep, always unawakening and peaceably. Kerens-h-tein would have been avenged at last, what with costing little to those whose upcoming sojourns were to better present themselves. Sharon reached her building and paused to consider that in the basement was a bath house to which she had ne'er hitherto lent any concern. It's not that she had been resentful of its presence, instead pausing to reconsider that it, too, had probably been done over with regard to some pastest inclination. Historical atmospheres changing but then not had always played teasingly, what with coming on again in some more welcoming fashion and daring upon one's own timidity outright. How practical it must have all been! Some fifteenth-century Arabian portal passing on, some sunlit filtering and favoring those within one moistened cauldron could have exercised gently upon such tenderest of musings. Peering through some layered midst, one form barely looked up to and unwilling to recognize the fact that they, too, might have at times sat longingly. Lying within some aching bath warming and gazing upwards through some illumined fog, downward rectangular prism of misted enchant ne'er forgone would have rendered unnecessary any present need for self-gratification. And all the while with some silkened form moving more gently still, this time within some slower motion turning more softly and revealing of some gentler supplicant lowly and unashamed. Sharon could remember as a little girl accompanying her mother to the baths on Brighton Beach Avenue and then all flustered at not being able to enter. Waiting outside until some uncertain urge pressed upon and might tempt towards one's own softest inhibition. Trying harder to escape some nagging indecisiveness on her part, lingering guilt as some constant reminder of this fast upcoming mortality inescapable, some quicker rush to judgement calling still. *Come in, Sharon! Just come in!* But Sharon could not move. Standing still, moving first to then fro within some littler known pre-adolescent

misunderstanding and budding fear would prevent any such premature emancipation. Some blander looking into and lurching cautiously upon those more insipid misconceptions were to bar Sharon from performing even those milder tasks so cherished ordinarily. She might have considered following on in hope of encountering some slighter intimidation, gentler impedance toward her once purest imagination still. But she might not have brought herself to enter the bath house on that day. *Come in! Just come in!* If not for one such supplication and could have become, resting temporarily upon some numbness, inner inclination and likelier musings which could have caused her to move on more slowly toward this kinder appreciation. In fact, she entered the bathhouse. Some more reluctant going back and then not wishing to annoy, commonplace maternal instinct knowing better would have always given way to Sharon's own. Hers was a still developing sense, and would later be inclined to some more lasting reliance on deception as a legitimate means. Half-naked women readying themselves for some more vaporous satisfaction would leave its own lingering impression as captioned figures stooped in one's own soapier deliberation had, and gathered around some opened shower stalls. Wanton displays and unabashed sightings might have encouraged Sharon onto some more lifelong project, sinuous coming downs and ne'er vestal throughout. Some finer milk, willed determination in sensing a more rounded, curved response to those sightlier grievances which would soon begin to take their toll. Sharon had never been able to forget those more pungent aromas leaving behind as her mother had guided along some less insipid path, within some sleeker determination and might brush gently against one of those of the younger set. Not all that much older than Sharon, they would go on seeming unimaginably beautiful, and impressing upon her waywardest sensibilities right up to and throughout her time at the girl's high school. Then slipping into her bathing costume would have only let onto some more regularly encouraged vulnerability, regularly possessed penchant foretold for missed opportunity one after another. One more fleeting whisk of fetidity could have only encouraged this more proper disposition and wilfully, with now setting in place one final sheathe, some tenderest envelopment calling out to Sharon's lone solitary possibility. She had not regretted making any concession to her mother on that occasion, and being ever so more intent on hurrying at her mother's behest she did move within some quicker tide. Neither Kerenstein nor Kerens-h-tein could have dissuaded her from answering the call, for falling back might have presented her with one more seductive sensation, this gentler multitude now having begun to take its toll. Still perfumed hair length tide of forward motion and leaving Sharon's mother in some state of complete anticipation for the girl. Kerenstein staring downward dutifully and carefully measuring steps across some rectangular grid, some warmest ceramic turning up in comelier regard, comelier boutique of massed motion towards one's inner pool of feminine effete. Opaque figures poorly understood might have caused Sharon to momentarily forget where it was she had been becoming. The baths at brighton beach had long been done over in some distinctly eastern style, and this became quickly evident upon entering the main enclosure. Some less serious interpretation could have more easily been called for, and this might be ill-considered when taking into account some tide of fertility to which it acquiesced on this or any other day. Some rising swell longed after, and content to frame the quarterless spirit soaking through this forever changing panorama would embellish Sharon's initial experience and upon lowering herself slowly into the lukewarm bath. It more resembled one of those swimming pools in which she had passed considerable hours when she was a toddler. Barely recognizing the inconsequential, premature play wrought and left indelibly upon one's own girlish innocence would certainly tend to titillate. Hours upon hours of oceans swelling in

gentler play, this way then that until her mother could tolerate some youthful enthusiasm no more. Leaving the little one behind and going off in search of one finer attraction, behind some more corpulent figure glancing back at mister so-and-so in arduous want until Sharon's youthful gleam might cease to punish. Prelude to some quieter moments would all but seal this fearfully maternal bond into which both had been so cruelly tossed. Now her mother would have been content to guard some less combative demeanor, for Sharon had been quite adamant at the main entrance. Some larger rectangular pool in accommodation of one's own more tepid aqueous repose and could only entice her to enjoy this and what was to become her most quintessential vaporous moment. Calling down to her innermost wishes and would feel some slowly rising, effusive understanding unsatisfied and demanding more ever still. Warmed and warmer seeking of some pleasanter response to that most age-old of dilemmas, self-gratification disguised beneath this temperate baptism ne'er blessed and most tellingly of one, as if having been refined upon some more spontaneous nocturnal escape. But the time for such well-timed perfumed fancy had not yet arrived for Sharon, and little did she know that the murkier volume into which she presently occupied would eventually give way to her own yearning submissions. Some determination for uncovering that first organic saturation, generational harvest reaping her own self from within this none-too-ancient world. Older ideas and values caught up into and poisoning her more modern pretension of how things ought to be would eventually have their way with her. Then placing down upon this wettest bottom unyielding and could have only encouraged some more fantastic thinking about the way things should become.

When Sharon at last set upon the hostel's principal entrance, she became surer than ever, one and more staid throughout regarding her current project. Feeling those balmier sensations could have only flowed more freely from within some much earlier history well-intentioned, some more cosmic warmth transcendent and across some greater span of years would continue to tease Sharon in her warding off of time inescapable. Some better well-placed symbol whose meaning might depend upon one ill-shed character – Kerens-h-stein – and sitting in loneliest contemplation, enjoyment reeking from within every fiber in her slender frame. That her mother had spent a lifetime in complete ignorance of this or any other truth was irrelevant, although she had always detected some more of the inquisitive in her father. Some more gazing inwardly, seasoned debaucheries ne'er routine and would have forever let Sharon to blush unashamedly. Now entering and failing to notice the day porter leaning heavily, too dazed to know much about whether any of the occupants' post were pending to be recovered, letters received unknowingly and would firmly establish this city as some latest bastion of time sequestered. Sharon would have been in the habit of ignoring him in any case, strangely brought about to this particular establishment and would have inclined her to simply step up to the floor at which she would be residing. There was no lift, and Sharon had counted on this in some important way. Some not-so-peculiar device for retaining the little means which had accompanied her to Madrid, and for as long as she possibly could. Language classes aside, and rising swiftly above some stink which would continue to enshroud the day porter lifted Sharon as an angel none-too-lightly, some third floor lodging which would better serve. A bed, sink and toilet were all that adorned her present *touristique* and she would have liked to think that something worse might have easily materialized but could not find it in her heart to do so. Seeking the lowest of lowly circumstances had by now transformed into some wildest provocation, some purest pleasure consumption and would have greedily handed her all those more visceral benefits which had long been denied. Desperately trying not to let it discourage, and would even give rise to some more extraordinary thought regarding

whether or not she were about to re-live the recollection which had just been left at the main entrance, some moments prior and would tend to tempt Sharon toward one more sorely belated sensual feast. Now staring up through the window railing which marked off some slightest cleft to the outside, even if it were solely onto some interior patio which adjoined reluctantly to the neighboring building, and would have kept Sharon transfixed for yet another interval. It had been wide open since she arrived, and refusing of any attempt to limit any unwanted communication it may have afforded, some curious umbra holding her attention now set one's thoughts onto one more pointed comparison with the sunlight she had experienced in the street. As the second verse was wearing on, she had considered carefully some continuous dichotomy between the ever-present threat of winter precipitation and some more probable light cast splendor. Today was certainly more akin to the latter, and for this reason Sharon would continue to sit and stare through the open window railing in some considerable disbelief. Could she have become so shielded from even that remotest possibility of ever finding herself, so thoroughly given up for dead, that even some directest ray should be denied her? Some month-old mildew played off the opposite face concrete, drips finding their way down from some higher task insurmountable amid shouts – *agua va!* She had never heard anyone actually say that, although the mumblings she could have discerned compensated greatly for any lack of true verbal romanticism which might have been fancied. Words and phrases in some utterly foreign tongue flowing down freely and within echoes unintelligibly, reverberations unstopped would remind Sharon that hers was a genuine gift cherished by so few. Still she sat. Listening to some strange foreign voices penetrate her own pleading subconscious, spilling in through the window which she had now surreptitiously come to regard.

She would spend the next ten minutes as some aging married couple went on in blinder debate, voices at times threatening to form some presence upon the alley shaft, then not. Obligations had apparently gone unclaimed, anxious rebuke and more so on the part of the *señora*. Short, curt remarks were all she had had at her disposal, bouncing toward Sharon cheerfully off the concrete façade and attempting to be treated as little more than some unfortunate misunderstanding. After all, it is not as though some contrition were not forthcoming. Sharon could remember how her own father might succumb to those taunts and rages of some other self. Dying away into all but some completely inconsequential figure would have surely been instrumental in setting Sharon upon her present course. Now within one foreign intonation, then succumbing finally to some silence which had always threatened to overwhelm even that most robust of forward thought. Some three-second slow-motion fading into something lengthier, until one single murmur might dare to again impinge upon Sharon as she recalled the porter having remarked that avoiding the top floor would turn out to be the most discreet for everyone. Some top-floor clientele would have been completely transient, and those ladies accommodating in such a way as to redirect one down through some rear staircase to the service entrance and well out of sight. Since her arrival in Madrid, she had been keenly amazed by the ease with which some errant gentleman might encounter one gentler version of what it is he had long been committed to sadly. Slightlier timidities overlooking some tastier ground would have most likely gone wholly unsatisfied in the borough of Queens, what with forcing upon some less-than-seemly search and ridiculed. Some sport unrecognized and would lead Sharon to consider with pity this purely miscalculated flaw in what was otherwise some most enviable piece of property. She relished in those hushed tones of some cryptic prelude to the ritual which might come to follow, some more garbled offering at higher pitch. Still he might have reached downwards within some better resolve, gliding

reasonably upon one slightly raised nylon and half-hearted assent would have been to the liking of both, then come back down to Sharon and might be quite pleased to assume such a disinterested role. Some disinterested observer playing off the lust which now went unrequited, most faithfully perfumed entrance yearning and too quickly to content some silent recline upon one's own – two, three more minutes within. Then some more genteel notion, some sighing embitteredly and still more listening upward until Sharon's imagination could no longer gather beneath rising spasms of sweet exhaustion. Again sacrificing one's gaze to the whim of some concrete façade, some spiritual release unheard but felt in some aching way, pained expressions unwholly imagined would have piqued her curiosity nonetheless. Except for some return of the married couple, sounds now extinguishing those more ardent murmurings for which she had inadvertently become so grateful and might have been another five minutes before Sharon would rise from some soiled bed linen, laid impeccably and to which she had always been faithful. Certain basic requirements would have had to be insisted upon under any circumstance, some smallest piece of dignity towering out over a lifetime wrought with some untold abundance of protestation toward the contrary. It was to be as true for herself as for her students at Saint Mary's. That she would even grant herself the option of sitting where she had might have only attested to some sheerer incommodity which the hostel furniture could afford, no less toward any singular sensation which could have required her utmost personal touch so regularly denied. Now the married couple would have continued well out of earshot, less kindly impressions would have been being exchanged, and for this Sharon began to consider some of the other more pressing matters at hand. Some gainly employment could have only been to her advantage if she were indeed serious about procuring that final leap, some north-easterly sojourn and would require at least that barest minimum of means for wishing upon some colder admonition and with thinking back to Peggy Dooley's remark. Freezing, yes, but also endearing in its matter-of-fact playing upon one's own most inward-looking curiosities, and warmer still between those colder passages which might come to be regarded as past and future. After some brief refreshment, putting anew and without any bent toward the self-conscious, Sharon exited once more from her room. Stepping back down and towards some *bajo* expectantly of the day porter anew, and would point her out onto some continuing search. She had come across many items in the classifieds to which she might have responded, some impromptu professional forays into one's gentler means, self-propagation and putting one's best foot forward had never much played to Sharon's strength. Nevertheless, she had chosen to inquire into the possibility of one Opening English School, some more seriousness implied and without any pretense of being just another coming on. Sharon had decided to telephone ahead, in such a way as to prepare for any hidden complication, and which might come to confound at some future point in time. Some non-conformed, professional irregularity foretold by the little she had come to read concerning one's own outlook in this city and about. Some non-regulated educational forum, irregular situations tending to preside without one royal decree to show. Human nature would surely take its toll, although squarely upon Sharon she could never have anticipated. Those furthest days of disappointment were to be well expected but little hoped for, what with holding on for dear life until some smallest glimmer of hope went fading. For now, she was surprisingly pleased to find the porter behaving in some more regular fashion, while continuing to wreak of some habitual mid-afternoon repast, some anise-perfumed beginning to what would have inevitably become one's less-than-satisfactory day's *resumen*. Had anything occurred to pre-empt one's ever growing sense of disillusionment? Had anything redeeming washed up upon the shore of this ne'er quite

ingratiating riverbank? But the river was in some other part of town, thought Sharon, and the porter could have only imagined that which his lonely post would never be capable of affording. In any case, some most treasured custodian of a means which would have obliged her to speak with the man in slightly more than some superficial manner.

– *¿Se puede usar el telefono?*

– *Sí, por supuesto,* replied the porter.

She had been a bit concerned that it would be out of order, which would have led to some most uncomfortable jaunt from place to place in search of somewhere to speak. Barring this, she had been quite certain about the possibility of garnishing the porter's assistance. Still, it presented some starker nature, some almost threatening appearance which seemed wholly unredeeming considering the dimmer surroundings with which it coexisted. Some more unsettling squarer structure, regular rectangular expectation lacking and would have more easily dissuaded from entering into some evidently antagonistic enclave. Sharon could recall having once seen something vaguely familiar in the market on Beach 103rd Street, what with accompanying her mother as a child on some daily chore. By the time she had approached early adolescence, it had been replaced by one of those less characteristic appliances, and so not until seeing another alongside the porter's station did it surprise. Some little-used locutory, obsolete machine and about which Sharon wondered out loud as to the manner in which any charges might be accrued.

– *¿Cómo se paga por la llamada?*

– *Tú tranquila,* replied the porter. *Ya se indicará la carga aquí.*

The porter gestured confidently toward a small gray box sandwiched neatly between the desktop and lower shelf cupboard which guarded chaotically the various *facturas*, invoices and other miscellaneous pieces of paper which had become paramount to the correct working of the hostel. Sharon could have imagined some aging photo of such a mechanism in one of her history texts, some Marconi-inspired device for keeping track of any various and wholly superfluous communication which happened to occasion itself on any particular day.

– *Vale.*

Sharon's enthusiasm for some seemingly least important undertaking had long endeared her to friends and students alike. Each and every task would reveal itself in some joyous manner, smiling upon Sharon and reflecting inexhaustibly onto the world about her. Sharon dialled the number which was scribbled hastily on a small piece of paper she had been holding in her hand since coming down from her room. The keys seemed slow and awkward in responding, causing her to twice omit numbers and which appeared too faintly in some tinted glass at just above eye line sight. It was obvious that neither the porter nor anyone else regularly tidied the place, and this would have been inconsequential in some other context. Here it frustrated Sharon's efforts to properly speak with that person in whom she might have placed her complete trust, and

necessarily so in being able to soon realize some holiest pilgrimage, the thought of which now seemed to devour her every waking moment.

– *No sé. Parece que hay algún problema.*

Having now alerted the porter to some difficulty, she stepped back expectingly of some practical assistance and wondering if perhaps some purpose would not have been better served in looking for a telephone cabin on the outside, some languishing naiveté and would go on believing that being helpful were none-too-scarce a virtue. She would just as soon put her faith in anyone who would dare accept it, and how often had she written off the hypocrites whom she had met along the way, intrudingly upon her own good intentions. Rather than approach Sharon, the porter reassured regarding some correct functioning of the telephone, some earlier morning exchange having occurred uneventfully and there not having had been any other complaints in any case.

– *Pero esta mañana funcionó perfectamente,* he remarked incredulously.

– *Bueno,* she sighed. *Lo intentaré otra vez.*

While no-one could have ever doubted Sharon's command of the language, her accent went unyielding to the place from which she had arrived. Oft granted the admiration which she so deserved in putting forth some unabashed notion of herself, she would have spent hours arguing the whys and wherefores of bringing one's own experience into within some more playful realm of one's own personal style. Only then might the language come alive, leaving adrift some staler reminder of that which might seek only to persecute, some cultural decay or turning under which would inevitably sour the very relationship which might be intended to be fostered. Thus, the porter beamed slightly toward her last remark, some non-native intonation sounding at once comical and melodious. Some strange foreign beauty sensation teasing the porter with its coquetry yet oddly soothing in the refreshing manner with which it towered out over some aging civilization. Some greater stone obstruction thrown off momentarily and enabling the porter to breathe anew. Sharon brought the piece of paper nearer to her face and with some renewed sense of intent. As she once more went marking, some lesser thought should have occurred to her regarding the porter's unwillingness to extend himself. Hours upon hours of sitting in wait would seem to have stunted that very sense of self-absorption, tenderer sense of mingling with which the rest of us might pay occasional tribute to some more commendable side of one's own nature. Now sitting and staring ever more indifferently, the porter blended back into the shadow which some broader columnar structure cast upon his desk. Sharon made sure to this time leave the fleshy part of her index finger squarely down upon each key and momentarily. Some more sustained pressing downward might have eased one's gnawing sense that nothing was being achieved. Three more digits subsidingly would bring Sharon's quicker respiration to some milder pace, and now listening patiently for someone to answer the bell tone would have given her all the more reason to feel pleased about the way she had stepped out and over into such an extraneous predicament.

–...Opening English School. Can I help you?

– Oh, yes. I read your advertisement in the newspaper regarding teachers. Would I be able to come by for an interview?

– What is your name?

– Sharon Kerenstein.

– Hold on one moment, please.

She could not help but notice that the porter had by now taken some interest in what she had been pursuing. As she waited for someone to attend to her call, she toyed slightly with the porter's glance. Not being completely surprised by her willingness to accept him wholeheartedly into what had already become, inconceivable though it might have been and some very own life misinterpretation could have only resulted. So much so that she was genuinely startled upon once again hearing a voice on the other end, the telephone having now become some telegraphic oasis comforting Sharon, some semi-detached appendage grasped firmly between that which she had expected and those in which she had been believing. Some past and future again closing in upon her still poorly marked set of priorities. Sharon was spoken to quite politely by a man who claimed to be the director of studies. While his accent initially went unrecognized, it was not long before she could detect some decidedly other coast lilt and sway. Some non-congenital, non-continental laying back into some west coast early afternoon repast through one's own finer discourse intendingly would soak up those least ladylike sensations, secretly harbored desires for cozying up to one more university-minded geek and would mistake properly against those hopes and desires of this newer generation's inclination toward combining religiously those tenets of some swifter capitalistic endeavor and one's more repressed craving for finer enlightenment. Some not-so-dying breed of the craftier entrepreneur, some older continental favorite pouring down the history of this totally new-world state of mind. Where could this man have come from and how might he have arrived to assume such an unambiguous role? Sharon listened with some interest as he reeled off the settings and obligations which would have kept her within some tightlier rein for the next months. Still, she might have very well been becoming as guilty as he. Turning back from some finer devotion in seeking out some more theoretical endeavor, some more unjustified self-indulgence and would most likely end up lolling in complete disaster. Surely the girls at Saint Mary's were worth more than any single self-propagation, any such leaving to choice and turning one's own back on the problems which had beset squarely upon this more delicately placed new-world undertaking. Some casting off, guiltier feelings and would take much more time to reconcile, some furtherer catechism anointing her whose only desire it had ever been to aspire in disclosing oneself completely. Then bodily awaiting upon those discoveries which had influenced so unbendingly, years churning backwards and incessantly inspired to fathom once and for all – Kerens-h-tein – that smallest of reminders regarding one's own perpetually dogged state of insignificance. Sharon made an appointment to meet with the man in that very evening, and never would having considered such an alarming timetable in the borough of Queens. Both she and he would soon again be revelling in some more lately skewed breadth of existence, and so she replaced the telephone number to her bag and with one final glance at the porter still drab and unforwardly, expectant of Sharon and the other guests in bringing his own meagerest existence to within the realm of some sacrosanct minimum. Now in staid salutation – *hasta luego* – and sending her off as one more satisfied client sure to return

happily and what else might be able to be gleaned from amidst this most cherished guest's flowering possibility? Sharon quickly realized upon stepping out that some pleasanter sun had by now truly gone fast, and some later afternoon light would eventually determine its own path up and throughout the darker structures which had transformed into some neoclassical city mock-up. Some softer light substitute for the punishing regime which had disappeared mysteriously as Sharon sat disciple to the open window in her room. Ne'er knowing just how to behave along some less-than-determined route, trying hard to avoid those least precious interruptions which might madden and having captivated Sharon throughout some quickest jaunt along the avenue which receded. She dared some finer glance toward a young woman at the curb, seemingly lost within some most precious dream awakening. Some most thoughtful slumber and would further the young woman's withdrawal ever more so. Commonplace events so heartlessly altering the course of one's own meandering youth went overwhelming as some friends tried to catch her attention but deemed no consent. Sharon did her best to conceal the pity she felt as she went past, choosing instead to dwell upon those concerns which might be soon to materialize.

- III -

The telephones were ringing off their hooks, implacably, and with the promise of some ne'er once foretold jostling enterprise. Gonzalez could barely keep track of the day's sign-ups, and with some smokier aura of scholarship defeated once more went abounding through the plexiglass trails which marked clearly the boundaries between what would be taught and what would be told. Some more improper telling of one's own futurest impediment, wholly to which the *s*-panish had always lent some utmost concern. *Ya veremos*. One should have been able to grasp some larger scheme, closing one's eyes or turning about into some completer panorama and filtering in that which might be posing as considerably more than just some pre-instructional chaos. Masked cleverly within some educational guise but abounding in those thoughts reminiscent of some other prurient interest should have been obvious but seemed to defer nonetheless.

– The present perfect can be used whenever one likes in some other idiom, but let us not forget ...

– ... but how *is made* the present perfect?

– *Tim has gone away.... Where has he gone?*

(silence)

Where has he...?

– We need not place the article upon the subject in...

And so it would continue throughout the better part of a day, some thickening texture at times, earlier evening syntax would overlap and cause one to lose themselves within some sleeker youth clientele. Younger professionals or budding journalists

enticing within one's own more sensual garb. Then calling out to some teachers' imagination preparedness, and hoping for some final looking down onto that of one more departing. Some more gratuitous excitement making it all okay, what with needling and chatting up deliberately throughout the better part of one's day, seven-hour shift. Sharon was particularly struck by one rather short man, hastily working two or three conversations at a time. Then one more typically Spanish girl putting up with some other clients' more pointed inquiries, balancing precariously the duties with which she had had to contend from within and without, some longer distance communication designed to at once serve and attract. Some irresistible attraction giving over through the softer appreciation of one's own most willful confession, some grammatical deficiency teasing her along until bringing forth some more dazzling realization – we are truly beholden to you, sweet Loretta. That was her name, as if from the song but then not. *Loretto*. Some character having again gone fading complacently. Some easier recall for the anglophile would appear to be far less insipid than it actually was, and she never seeming to mind being thrown down into some gentler fashion. After all, a name was just a name, and would justify one lone character's cross cultural emasculation in any case. Loretta was seated at the receptionist's desk, although her official duties were to extend to far more than simply answering telephones and orientating students. Some primer situating and just off to one side of the main door, Loretta would be the first person whom one would see upon entering. Sharon could not help but think what a pleasant sight it was, and would have always been the first to sing the praises of some younger female *envoûtement*, some truer acknowledgement to which that first bath house visit as a small girl she attributed. She had been waiting patiently behind some very intent assiduous type, keen on playing upon Loretta's more professional demur and none-too-satisfied at the idea of having to return on some other afternoon to complete Gonzalez's matriculation form. Some piece of personal information gone askew would have left us all quite tendered, and not until stepping aside for some clearer view of Loretta's upper frame did Sharon begin.

- Hello. My name is Sharon Kerenstein. I have an appointment with the Director of Studies.
- Oh, yes. You called before, didn't you?
- That's right.
- Just one moment. I'll tell Bob that you're here.

The girl had a beautiful accent, and it was apparent that she had been one of those more adventurous types for whom travel abroad could only imply some more decidedly beneficial undertaking. Some more serious-minded attempt at learning to communicate squarely from without, some more superficial venue ne'er being able to suffice for one so conscientious. Either London or Oxford, thought Sharon. Perhaps both. Mere seconds had scarcely transpired when the director of studies came in answer to the call. Some quickened putting through to his downstairs office and now rising in some rambling way would come upon Sharon. Some more welcoming sense and grateful in any case to once again be speaking to someone from that which might have loosely come to be considered home.

- Hello, Sharon. I'm Bob Smith.

Sharon could not help but wonder at the wholly inexpressive manner with which Bob had presented himself. Some deadpan disregard which could have only been seeded through some more acid involvement amidst duties past, some more acrimonious encounter and would continue to shape the relationships which might come to cloud his futurest undertakings.

- Nice to meet you, Bob.
- Come downstairs and we can speak.

Some lone despondence, toiling in absolute anonymity and would lead Sharon down some more least obtrusive stairwell. Some lilt even slightlier than the voice she had heard on the telephone had gone betrayed, some more immovable lethargic motion transmitted none-too-reluctantly toward one's own extremities would prove insulting at times. Still, she took it upon herself to focus clearly upon some righter, perpendicular structure which the stairwell had presumed. Then stepping down onto some basement floor and eyeing intrepidly some whiteboard and furniture. Some generic wood processed finish and steely structures marking properly and out across one rather compact space. Sharon counted some five tables and twenty chairs in the main stage, with a few more having been tossed out and along the side.

- Is this a classroom? she asked.
- Actually, this is where we hold workshops and activities. Otherwise, it serves as a student lounge.

Bob swung open the door to his office with some unseemly wide reaching in front and around. Sharon almost misinterpreted the last figure, some swooshing accompaniment not being quite properly supportive of the context which he had been trying to construct.

- I noticed classes being given...
- Yes, regular *group* classes are given in the smaller spaces upstairs. There won't ever be more than five students at a time in those, and usually just two or three.
- I've read that you use your own teaching method.
- Oh, sure. As a rule, all learning of grammar is done on the computer. The software was actually developed specifically for this company. Once having finished a unit, they *must* have a *group* class with a live teacher before...
- ...a *live* teacher?
- You know, flesh and blood.

Sharon laughed heartily, but continued to marvel at Bob's unchanging expression. How often she had been commended! Some penchant possessingly of enticing one to unmask in defiance of their very own whim. She might have finally met her match in Bob, though. He continued when Sharon's gesture had ceased to enliven.

– You are flesh and blood, aren't you Ms. Kerenstein?

– *OOOOOh* yes, she replied coyly.

(silence)

– Call me Sharon.

– Fine. We do try to be as informal as we can.

(silence)

– So, am I hired? joked Sharon.

– That depends on whether you accept the conditions.

– I have my curriculum vitae right here.

– Oh, never mind that!

– I've also brought along a couple of reference letters which ...

– You'll do just fine. I'm not about to go contacting anyone in New York.

– How'd ya' know I'm from New York? she asked

Sharon grinned from ear to ear, some worthy challenge to Bob's otherwise blank stare which by now had come to resemble more of an ongoing stupor over which he could summon no control. After another prolonged silence, he replied.

– You're joking, right?

Sharon again let loose with some even more convulsive gesture. Bob had certainly not been the first to invent upon one of her more oral betrayals, and tellingly of some more cosmopolitan melding of expressions past.

– So, then, what *are* the conditions? she asked.

– Well...

Bob shifted smoothly in his chair, exchanging one leg for the other atop some leaner lap, some seeming to impress upon Sharon's still floundering sense of continental presence.

- ...you'll be required to do five seven-hour days, and with working every other Saturday morning. Monday, Wednesday, Friday — nine to four. Tuesday, Thursday — *splits*.
- Sorry?
- That's nine to twelve, six to ten.
- Oh...but seven classes a day?
- Six. Two hours teaching with a half-hour break.
- It sounds okay.
- Occasionally you might be asked to teach an eight o'clock morning class. Would that be a problem?
- I tend to be an early riser.
- *Really?*

Some downward inflection had gone especially noticed, and Sharon began to play audience to Bob's misplaced reminiscence regarding some prettier version awakening listlessly over a San Diego beach. Some lower horizontal beam playing spot to the life which Bob had once envisioned before one's own entanglement went drawing mercilessly would have otherwise made for some more pleasant conversation in any other place. The director's face turned to despair as he seemed to gesture toward the artificial light which had long become some tearful signature of his present predicament. Alas, Sharon was being made to feel decidedly uncomfortable about being swept unawares into some such rumination and she quickly changed the subject.

- May I ask the salary?
- Yes, but remember we are talking about *teaching* in *Spain*.
- Of course.
- A hundred-twenty thousand pesetas, plus monthly bonuses awarded on a branch-competitive basis.

(silence)

- Well... I wasn't expecting much.

Bob continued staring at Sharon as it went on apparent that she was struggling with her thoughts.

- I'll take it. When do I start?

- There’s a staff meeting in twenty minutes. Why don’t you attend? Afterwards, you can see Loretta about getting your paperwork and schedules.
- Loretta. Is she the young lady ...?
- ... in reception, yes.
- She’s a lovely girl, and speaks so beautifully.
- She studied abroad for some years. She’s quite good.
- And she seems to be very personable...

(silence)

- ... working reception and all, continued Sharon
- Not as personable as I would like, I’m afraid.

(silence)

- Well ... whatever that means, remarked Sharon.
- Anyway, don’t call her a receptionist if you want to stay on her good side.
- Why not? wondered Sharon.
- Because she’s a teacher like the rest. Well, not like all the rest. She is what the company has designated a *personal* teacher..
- See! She is personable, then.

Bob again simply watched as Sharon delighted in her latest play on words.

- The company has designated *personal* teachers to deal with the specific needs of individual students over and above their computer exercises and group classes.

Bob was now speaking in a very measured way, so much so that anyone else’s nerves might have been completely rattled.

- Like a tutor? asked Sharon.
- Exactly. She sits in reception when she’s neither attending to students...*personally*...nor preparing lessons. But she’s generally resentful of having to do reception.

- I see. Why isn't she a regular teacher? inquired Sharon.
 - Haven't you seen the advertisements — *native* teachers and all that sexy stuff?
 - Oh, of course.
 - I might also tell you, continued Bob, that *all* teachers are expected to help out in reception when they can.
 - I don't mind. I can be pretty personable myself.
 - I'm sure you can, Sharon. I'm sure you can.
- (silence)
- So where will the meeting be?
 - Just out here in the workshop space.
 - Okay. Well... see you in a bit.

The meeting began on time, which immediately seemed to Sharon to be not so Spanish a thing to do. There again, it would have been here that something more transient were to go receding, and eventually leading her back to some more proper frame of getting on with it. This she had been considering as she sat upstairs in the waiting area along with some of the students. Again some finer looking types noticeably, some more deadly serious browsing through some more pretending publications of languages abridged. Some cultural abyss turned under strainingly, and cultivated quietly amongst this ne'er-too-trusting population. She at once went trying upon Loretta, suitably bedecked in some tight black sweater, and in hope of being able to attend to some paperwork more prematurely than Bob had suggested. She might still have been able to catch the six-o'clock film at the movie house near the hostel, some subtitling could have only annoyed and persuadingly of some more modern Spanish screenplay upon which Sharon could better rely. How so often difficult it had been to make that trip downtown on some other Saturday afternoon! Some more intellectually fulfilling west side cinema filling up with those who might have been craving some more foreign sensibility on that day, and with Sharon sleeping in or resting upon one one's own softest resolve. Some habitual looking ahead to those classes which were to become something better intended, more genuinely imparted toward one sea of adolescent female necessity and counting on Sharon to provide with still one more dash of pedagogic persuasion. Loretta had not the time for Sharon at that moment, and it went all too noticed as to just how busy the poor girl really was. Now unrepentant and thinking that the few months she had thus far been living in Madrid had not been enough to blunt the ferocity with which she usually attended to things, and this for the better consideringly, some longer journey pending and sure to test one's ability to dedicate. Bob began by reviewing the formal procedures for ascertaining that one's

work permit was in order. Her holding neither student status nor any familiar relation, and would have had certainly been the reason for some overly extended session with the consular officer. Struggling to convince regarding some furtherest professional co-validation had served more poorly than she would have hoped, and finally obliging to give herself up to those more ethereal sensations so long denied within some other regime. When she had looked upon it for the first time, she was amazed by some quickness in realizing the futility of trying to deny. Some most practical means of procuring what she needed, and quicker still the need to always seek some better means for circumventing the bureaucracy here. Some briefest affair must have surely driven toward one's own better expectations on the part of the porter, or could Sharon have had thought more carefully about how she might to disguise any future reminiscence revealed? She could not have imagined that she would end up needing more than the single year's laboral recognition which she at last managed to procure. Still, she would have never been completely unattending to the idea of seeking some extension should she have been called upon to do so. One more softest moment reconsidered would have only added unquestionably to some previous lifetime wrought with ne'er ending curiouser sensations of non-maturation. With such items ticked off the agenda, Bob went on to consider those points which, while not entirely didactic, would have served toward being vital enough for maintaining some more proper dynamic at the school.

- Books for the third cycle are currently in print. They should be ready by next week, but we haven't got too many students who ...
- ...are there *any* in that level, Bob? asked Liam.
- Actually, just five or six at the moment.
- Why bother with the books, then? Why not simply...
- Their tuition is just the same as the others. I think reliable text is the *least* we can provide ...
- Matthew'd surely like to provide that blonde ...
- Okay, Liam. Just keep your nose out of my ...
- Don't the two of you ever quit sparring? asked Bob.
- Can't help it, bloke. Ya' know what they say 'bout the Irish 'n' English...
- What *do* they say? went on Bob.
- Ya' know, Bob, hundreds of years of animosity there. Pretty grizzly stuff, really.

Some suddenly sprayed-about cast of characters had just seemed to reveal itself. Some whitened canvass stretched out onto Sharon's own sprawling imagination could not have been more unexpected, yet more kindly received. Some subtler mixing of anglophilic sensibility of which Sharon could never have partaken in

some directest manner. Some gaelic expression had always gone yieldingly in the borough of Queens. One ne'er-too-reluctant submission and would make for some gentler trains of thought joining inevitably into one more new-world cacophony. Now some more intransigent posture presented Sharon with this newer flavor being brought upon, some more genuine animosity and would nevertheless entertain within one's own more voyeuristic scheme. Bob quickly ceded to a youngish spectacled lady, also *irish* from what could be gathered and with some disarming straightforwardness to which Sharon would later covet as her very own.

- When will those whiteboards be arrivin', Bob?
- Look, Stevenson, stop breaking my nuts about ...
- ...breakin' his *noots* he says! chuckled Stevenson.

But it was clear to Sharon that Stevenson had more up on Bob than just some casual laugh, some deeper ongoing mistrust in the way that Bob had been mishandling the branch. In fact, the Opening English School was a chain of interlocking venues, fast held-together by some most rigid conformity in every aspect not unlike those fast food enterprises which entice through their menu but wallow in some mercurial lack of accountability.

- So are we to assume that we'll continue havin' to write on plexiglass? asked Liam.
- They use whiteboards over at the institute for chrissake. I used to ...
- ..teach there. Yes, but this *isn't* the institute, Stevenson.
- You're tellin' me it isn't! Paid a lot better than the shit they dole out here, I'll tell ya'.

Sharon would have liked to ask Stevenson why she had left the institute in the first place. She certainly could not remember any institutes seeking teachers from what she could recall, but perhaps began to wonder if it had been foolhardy to jump into the first thing she came upon. Now having sat quietly for some quarter of an hour had begun to go sharply against some better nature, some more primitive necessity to dare others into absorbing one's own more urgent need for freer association.— *chiacchierone* is what Mr. Borsellino used to call her back in Queens. Sharon chose not to address Stevenson just yet, instead intending to procure some information regarding the whiteboards for lack of anything better to offer.

- Yes, Bob, why *does* everyone write on plexiglass here?
- ...'cause it's *cool*, chimed Matthew.
- Well, there is a somewhat less sarcastic explanation...
- Oh, ya' go on and tell 'er then, Bob! cried Liam.

- It’s just a matter of space. The classrooms are small...
- ... classrooms, are they Bob? Tiny glass cages from whaddaye can see, remarked Liam.

A brief silence ensued as Bob went expressionless and staring down onto Liam, then going on without any noticeable seam in what he had been saying. Such a deftness would have surely been useful at St. Mary’s, and Sharon continued to marvel at the prolonged altercation which such an innocent remark could have occasioned.

- ...so that the management thought it would be both more convenient *and* more cost effective to use markers on the plexiglass dividers.
- Cheap bastards is what they are, mumbled Stevenson.

Bob had not even bothered to introduce Sharon to the rest of the staff. In any other circumstance, this would have been quite disturbing and occasioning something decidedly more unpleasant. Not so here, for the fray into which she had been tossed seemed oddly comforting in and of itself. Some unforeseen digression and back into one’s own primordial womb, swimming about and listening to sullen voices on the outside beckoning. Never wanting to emerge and holding forth would have continued being the rule, and having encountered some unconfirmed oasis of native tongue properly used would calm Sharon’s ever panting bosom. Some contiguous heaving upon heaving would again come creeping, and might have left her strangely unsatisfied if not for some hurriedly conceived reunion, putting together they whose mission it had not been to succeed at this noblest profession. Rather satisfaction delivered through some well proportioned turnings on, some carnal temptation fused unwittingly and threatening to eclipse the erudition to which Sharon had long since become so devoted.

- José Miguel will be coming in shortly to give us a quick summary of the monthly statistics. I believe he has some pretty good news regarding our branch and some very good forecasts for next month.
- Who’s José Miguel? interrupted Sharon.

Sharon’s accent – *hoZAY* – was now far too much a provocation for Matthew to ignore.

- Who *is* this woman, Bob? I can barely place the accent.
... somewhere between Boston and Philadelphia, I think.
- New York, said Sharon.
- Oh! Don’t get too many of you folk ‘round here. Nice town... statute and stuff. What part ...?

– Why don't you and Sharon get together and go over all of that later?

– Cheers, Bob.

With that, José Miguel entered the room. Some newly motivated entrepreneur, some overly frustrated entity at having become absorbed into the machinations of some budding new enterprise in hot pursuit and squeezing the very life blood out of its taller, muscular frame well carried – *guaperas*. Sharon could have instantly let herself become smitten, if not for some scorn insinuation expressingly, one of Stevenson's more stinging visages and which she were to encounter regularly throughout her course at the Opening English School. Totally *presumido*, she might think, and even to the point of eventually dyeing completely some cross-cultural desire to which she had so often alighted in the past. Some prettier young man moving hastily and with the appearance of some better person driven, one more macho sensation chargingly – *toro!* – some innermost need to secure one's tiniest piece of this presentest bounty overlooking, what with capturing facts and figures unentertainingly. Some sleeker brown hair preened backward along some scalp of silkened incline, calling forward those more finely expectant *señoritas* to whom such classroom instruction had always provided some more well-allured, calculatingly libidinous misinterpretation. Certainly quite selective with whom he might divulge one's innermost statistics pending, some more overt competition driving a wedge between those for whom this one bludgeoning academy might suffice and those with whom it would give into warmly. Some sweeter home-sweet-home ne'er ending and sadly giving face to the pathetic onslaught which some finer erudition were to go up for. Some misregulation completely spent upon the backs of those recruited unwarily, some alabaster essence fragrantly setting one's notebook down in total surrender, unaware of even some slightest need toward defending oneself against those abuses being twice conceived. Some more flesh-driven ambition lusted after and savored for the very essence which it would have left inside, some more ethereal embrace and still another bringing along some far more sinister motive unforeseen.

– *Buenas tardes a todos. Lo que tengo que contaros no tardará nada ...*

– Who's the appointed translator for today, Bob? asked Liam.

– Why doesn't our newest staff member do the honors. Would you mind, Sharon?

– Oh, is this ...? Oh, sure. Okay.

Bob's request took Sharon completely by surprise. She had not considered that some babel heritage forthright would have given over to some more difficult problem when it finally came down to it, and it was indeed as she had always professed to her students at St. Mary's. Some week-upon-week complaining over some more apparent lack of necessity for doing this or that which would have become too overbearing for even Sharon to tolerate. Until one day finding herself within some most unlikely lot, bemused retreat into the state of mind for which she had always gone

yearning. She would later find out that only she, Stevenson and Bob could deal with the *s-p*anish.

– Ah ...

Sharon's darting glance this way then that only seemed to highlight the facial *maquillage* which she had been so careful to conceive before leaving her room at the hostel. Some more taking pity upon one so softly endearing could not have entered more so into the mind of one more omniscient observer, sitting patiently within the corner of this once promising course so frivoled.

– ...this won't take long, began Sharon.

– *Las estadísticas para el mes pasado han salido. Nuestra sucursal ha quedado tercera en una categoría, y cuarta en otra.*

After some few seconds of irrepressible silence, Sharon spoke.

– Should I ...? Um... Last month's statistics are out, and our branch has come in third in one category and fourth in another. ...Is that...?

– Yes, Sharon, that's fine, replied Bob impatiently.

– Oh, c'mon Bob. Don't be too hard on 'er. It's 'er first time, scolded Liam. She'll do a helluva lot better than Stevenson over there....

– Remember that great translation I did fer all of ya' last week? chuckled Stevenson.

– *Christ*, that was brilliant! exclaimed Matthew. José hadn't a fucking clue about what ...

– What happened, tell me! pleaded Sharon.

– Later, reprimanded Bob.

– *Lo del tercero era por valoración de profesor, y del cuarto para nuevos "sin-oops"*.

– The third place was for teaching ...evaluation...?

– Yes.

– ... and fourth place was for new ...er...

(silence)

– *I don't know!* laughed Sharon.

- Yeah, said Liam. Our fearless leader does the best he can with the lingo.
- ...*sign-ups*, exclaimed Bob.
- Well, kudos to Mr. Gonzalez for that one! exclaimed Matthew.
- Where *is* the man of the moment? asked Liam in feigned concern.
- Probably ropin’ in another poor *schnook*, murmured Stevenson.

Gonzalez was actually one of two salesmen assigned to the branch. Pretty much working *sans surveillance*, he would have been given free rein over whom he might approach regarding the procurement of new clientele, some correcter semblance of language learning always for the offing in his mind. Gonzalez had the charm of some gentler rendering, some more finely polished skills massaging the egos of those whose yearnings could ne’er be assuaged by some lesser testimonial, some leaner path put forward and meant to provide some still cheaper form of self-gratification. The Opening English School should have been true to its name, some yet untarnished reputation for placing those over the top would tend to corrupt at first but then relax. Some well earned relaxation giving its students the impression that all would be well in the end. Some newly devoured tendency toward engaging in unfettered intercourse with those for whom some native tongue could go on only too inadequately. Some *good evening, good morning* would give Gonzalez all the opportunity he might need to entice successfully onto some better path chosen, and how often he had had to chide Stevenson for even mentioning the institute out loud. Sharon would never stop marvelling at the prolonged stares his presence would engender, be it during a class or while sitting in wait patiently for one’s own scholarly melee to commence.

- Gonzalez *is* very good, remarked Bob, and it’s about time he’s shown up near the top.
- Cheers, Bob!

Stevenson just rolled her eyes at Liam’s last remark, some less-than-sincere patronizing and poorly done at that.

- What’s that translate into in the *nomina*? asked Stevenson.

(silence)

Stevenson stared blankly at Sharon.

- Oh ... D’ya want me to ...? *¿Como afectará a las nóminas para este mes?*
- *Pues, esperáis siete mil pesetas más*, replied José.

– Whoa, Liam! Now you can buy that new Ferrari you’ve had your eye on! exclaimed Matthew.

– Fookin’ cheers to that one, bloke! replied Liam.

So it would have continued, some none-too-much being neither made nor said of anything. Minutes and more minutes of Bob’s hopelessly trying to keep a grip on things, the children from across in hottest pursuit of some more worthwhile diversion most easily procured. Some age of enlightenment experience putting stalwart into one’s own bank of miscellany recollected. Time and tide drawingly against some interest accumulating faithfully throughout the course of one’s later years would comfort upon reaching that final breadth. This they could have only hoped, and in doing so provided unwittingly for some calmer affectation which would pull one gently within this somewhat laudable script fulfilling, some most fortunate incorporation and for this Sharon would feel forever pleased. As for Sharon’s relationship with Bob, it were to quickly convert into some mutually symbiotic cover for occurrences which might have been considered inconceivable at any other time. College preparation had gone encouragingly for Bob, some pleasanter west coast warmth nurturing throughout one’s own overtly sheltered childhood. Some ne’er knowing where to go or who to be had always gone terrifyingly, although ever so much more than in Sharon’s case. Some certain lack of identifiable retreat had consistently let Bob with one last moaning probability. Some sitting submissively beneath rounded beads of falling rain would have planted the seed for one’s own encroaching sense of underachievement, some more expectant blend of *laissez faire* and tutelage long sought, and even after all were to implode so heartlessly. Sharon would continue to do her best in any case, and thinking forward to some next day’s initiation might be all she would ever need in order to see herself through this forever more drawn out existence with which she had been so cruelly encumbered.

- IV -

Upon leaving the school, Sharon found herself suddenly with nothing in particular to do with her evening. She might return to her room and spend a few hours reading the novel she had picked up at some news kiosk earlier that afternoon. Some second-rate Argentinean author nevertheless might keep her curiosity piqued until unsure of whether the reading of any such *cuento original* might further enrich her still overly exaggerated sensitivity toward those more banal life situations which she had come to abhor. Sensing the porter’s presence would have once more left her all too indecisive, sure to provoke some nagging feeling of incompetence all over again and wishing for one more voyeuristic interval from without. Still, she might very well inquire on the morrow as to the possibility of getting the window repaired, although she was fairly sure as to the porter’s reply. Then completing the paperwork which Bob had anticipated seemed to have left her in some quite audacious state, some having to do certainly with the friendlier manner with which she had been treated by Loretta, and would have threatened to undermine quickly some more struggling pose of professionalism which had always been to the heart of Sharon’s own. Loretta had felt it would be more accommodating for both if all were taken care of in fuller view of the reception desk. Some busier hour now arriving would have tended to hold one captive,

even at the risk of feeling too overworked to continue and would have naturally required one's somewhat divided attention. Sharon could not have helped but experience some sitting adjacent, softer invitation which were to define this still softer silhouette fragrantly brought forth as Loretta leaned forward and across. Some slightest black hair stroking gently against Sharon would be all too impossible to savor from without, and Sharon could feel free to intimate without really knowing what it might have been that Loretta had been contriving. Or, indeed, whether anything at all could have been being touched upon consciously. While not having had been favored with precisely what Sharon might regard as a pretty face, Loretta did certainly call one's attention to the way with which she carried herself. Some more finely insinuated manner in the way she would give in, something more envisioned transparently through one's own more curvilinear structure arching backward. Some nearer sight of the way her tits would put forth invitingly within some more closely fitting knit, and one well-fashioned sense of impenetrability did come to mind as Sharon inquired as to the information which she would be required to furnish, page-upon-page of personal information requisites. Then putting forth once more upon Sharon would have had her respond vaguely enough beneath some more wanton pressure until all too unwilling to proceed.

– *¿Perdón, tiene hora?*

Sharon could barely hear what the elderly woman standing in front of her was saying. She had evidently been halted throughout various seconds, and some reverie freshly sweetened could not allow for any such conjecture concerning what she might do with the rest of her day. Some unassuming street corner and pressing upon Sharon to take a decision, observant of the commodity which she must have presented and completely open to anyone in need of something still less orientative .

– *Son las seis*, she replied.

Briefly bringing to mind the six o'clock show which she were to attend at the cinema seemed not to lead to any kind of frustration. On the other hand, having just stepped out into near complete darkness became confusing until such admittance reminded, universally and that the clocks had been set back just a couple of days prior. Six o'clock. It occurred to Sharon that it might be a good time to get to know the neighborhood, as she had once done when first arriving to teach in Queens all those years earlier. At that time doting upon some more sea-steeped inoculation, some newly inspired desire to set off in search of one's own more private volition would have left her to those who were to become as family for the next many odd years. That so cherished a mix of peoples from long gone, flavors and varieties unrecognized until some time awakening, newer existence brought over did teach Sharon all she might ever need to know concerning those more righteous respectings which would be all too difficult to come upon in her present circumstance. That the girls high school would have been squarely in the midst of some *erin-go-bragh* had only come to foretell the microcosm in which she presently found herself. She now looked forward to the panorama which such a staff of colleagues might afford, happily playing nemesis to the more serious-minded approach which Bob was seeking to foster and rescinding further from the generational shift with which Sharon had once been so familiar. For now, she submitted to some penchant which seemed to have moved her more surely down and along the *Avenida de la Albufera*, some main thoroughfare accessing this more working-class section of the city. Walking past shop windows would have called up

some eerily familiar portrait, and she began to wonder whether her great grandfather might not have experienced precisely that which was now being presented. Just why this place should have offered up any resemblance to that of her forbearers would be hard to explain, and the notion that she might suddenly feel satisfied with her endeavor could not square with some recklessness which her friends back home (and ultimately her students, as well) had probably projected upon her. Still, Sharon took some unexpected comfort in that warmer feeling which embraced her as she walked intently through what had now become some chillier evening. Further and further she walked down the *avenida*, youthful boys whistling out to pretty young girls...

*... danzan por la avenida
todas son las señoritas
no tienen ni un poco de la alegría
señorita, una vez te vi*

Sharon could remember as a student hearing such a refrain on the streets of the lower east side, dancing and daring others as they might go. Then having had caught the number six train upon finishing her last class at Hunter college and southerly to her uncle's warehouse-on-canal did reveal some more vital mix of cultures. There did adorn, some none-too-infrequent melody carrying forth from one more multilingual manifestation. Some graciously received libation did moisten the very reason as our having been placed here so long ago by these, one's family of origin and could this deem some equally deserved reverence for generations to come? Sharon thought so, some newer world manner unpossessing would welcome all and anyone, tradition having mootly transformed Kerens-*h*-tein into one most gleeful retreat. Some lingering refuse tided over and cast determinedly into the annals of history spent. Still, she feared in her heart that it would not come to fruition for her particularly — Kerenstein.

*... siempre guardan sus sonrisas
todas son las señoritas
señorita, una vez te vi*

Now hearing the same refrain in such an unforetold setting seemed to lend ever more to this general corroboration of her once unhurried vision. *We are all children of immigrants.* Sharon's comment had done little more than entice some futherest complacent accommodation, some dilatory nodding which was all that could be convoked, and why it should have failed to impress Sharon went all too understood. Dreamily sitting still, gazingly and classroom banter all coming down too swiftly for those more carefree. Some more confining youthful inhibition was all there was to be dealt with in those days, and Sharon's attempt at something nobler could have been understood as nothing more than some impending middle-aged torpidity. Now coming back up the other side of the street did remind Sharon of the beauty which seemed to enshroud, tainted melodies fading off into some more promise nightly and would tempt her beguilingly with thoughts of future pleasures once assumed to be too enduring to pursue. She came upon a bar not too far from the corner at which she had begun, and might have been akin to any of the others she had had cause to frequent during her time here. It was often heard that there were more bars in Madrid than in all of some other country or city, some just which she could not recall. This Sharon quickly came to

fashion for herself, and she would always look forward to the next experience, however it might come alighting. Now something more decorous seemed to seduce her into entering, some wholly unassuming intent nevertheless and without really needing to indulge in anything at all would have kept Sharon from fading beneath one's own idler display. Gazing in briefly past some well-stacked monumental adorning might have provoked some more pious notion regarding the scarcity which one should learn to tolerate in this life. Some fewest amenities which went for offer could have only indicated that this establishment's time had come and disappeared. Some more antique setting had managed to hold on far longer than anyone in the *barrio* could have thought, some slighter offering still taking pride great-heartedly over the chidings and chants of some more highly earned enterprises. Some overly ambitious display of bottled waters piled high, gaseous refreshments winking outward within some tighter formation did cause Sharon to wonder as to what might have actually become of that charging potability. Walking her mother down to the corner grocery store had never seemed to alleviate some more throbbing incertitude, some less-than-magnificent thirst which she would continually find to be as exacerbating as anything she could possibly dare imagine. Now entering with one out-of-place table on her right — *mesa para dos* — which Sharon considered momentarily. Sitting there would have certainly been wanting in some commoner unpleasantness which did usually complicate one's more unapproachable intent, some short-lived self-remediation and might convince painstakingly regarding the need to continue moving forwards. Some certain need for sitting alone, to be sure, but this was clearly not the case. There was just one other person in the bar besides she and the bartender, some tired-looking man bent over at the furthest corner of some most magnificent of brass structures. There upon some quicker re-thinking would have further led her to acknowledge reluctantly some maladjustment in the way the furniture had been arranged, haphazardly and could no longer tolerate some nagging disorder which had come to define her very own. She decided to sit at the bar. Turning down and around, two righted angle desviations perfectly aligned did lend ample space to those patrons who might have recently partaken of some usual earlier evening repast. The gentleman whom she had greeted across some metallic tray of glass and porcelain was considerably older than most whom she had come to expect to be performing such a gruelling job. Some longer day's labor certainly did pay tribute to that profession for which there was no representation more universal, even if some more unpredictable comings-and-goings had tended toward becoming more difficult at certain hours than at others. She guessed that he must have been the owner.

— *Buenas tardes. ¿Qué le pongo a usted?*

His voice sounded wan and intentionally unresourceful, further leading Sharon to conclude that he was either substituting for his usual employee, or simply in permanent need of some kinder later-year avocation.

— *Un café con leche, por favor.*

Sharon's eye was at once caught by some attractive young woman who entered quickly and with some certain sense of purpose. Some more genuine state of haste went remindingly of those gentler swirls with which Loretta attended to the reception desk. The young woman's companion waited outside in one of those smaller model automobiles, and placed rather precariously in the taxi lane as she asked the old man for change. What she could have possibly wanted change for was well beyond Sharon's

reach, for some younger mindset did surely preside over this none-too-sudden demise of the public telephone cabin. Whereby some less formidable means of transportation was neither wanting, and aside from the fact that her manner was not all that correctly telling of such a venue, she was given the change she requested. She left as quickly as she came in, and once again leaving Sharon to the whims and provocations of this wholly unrehearsed letup, all focused upon her and watching patiently as the old man turned toward the espresso machine without ne'er so much as a thought from within. Taking advantage of some staring back toward the left rear would have naturally paid some debt of recognition to the tired-looking man, whose final third he did cradle and becoming more expectant of the bartender (for all he knew). With little more than one quicker twist of brazen metal did he prime the coffee well, and having just packed tightly against and within did bring to Sharon's mind that sweeter sensation, sipping dutifully from one warmed cup until all pretension of advancing had become inconsequential.

– ¿...vaso, verdad?

– ¿Perdón?

Sharon's indication that the old man's question had gone escapingly was purely reflexive, for she was well aware of the Spanish penchant for some later tea-time choice. It would always demand some more determined fabric in the way one's own choice of vessel – cup or glass – were to come about. Still, she had rarely ever drunk hot coffee from a glass back in Queens.

– Sí ... vaso, she replied.

Sharon did suddenly begin to feel quite pleased about deciding to stop in. The place certainly was an antique. It reminded her of the Italian bar on Mulberry which she might occasion with some of the other teachers just before holidays and the like. They had always tried to keep Sharon from suggesting something other than staying local, but Sharon would always succeed in convincing, if not absolutely, then at least enough within one's own eternal cottoning to something less familiar. Some *antipasto* setting merrily and far away lore calling one back to their ancestry would have kept such venues thriving for years on end. Some newer world diversity being fed by one's own blander background setting would ne'er find wither there. Here, alas, the situation demanded no such elaboration, and so Sharon sat amidst what was more than likely to soon crumble into the pages of that one yellowed list – Kerens-*h*-tein. Some faded character again falling into the disuse which could have marked its very own forward time trajectory, some future form caught up in a grammar which Sharon would at once come to impart wholeheartedly, and with some completely forgotten misdemeanor nay hovering about. Kerens-*h*-tein forgotten. Kerens-*h*-tein begotten and sub-rendered. All of this played out miraculously in her mind as the old man set Sharon's coffee down onto the bar.

– ¿...leche caliente, no?

One's more-than-rhetorical outlook would have always painted over some more linguistic nuance which usually implied educatedly here, and once having had gone through the motions would have justified some still heartier aspiration which might have appeared too unseemly to a foreigner like Sharon. Then, all too willing to

consent to even those harsher propositions would have led us all to truly perceive the kindness which hovered characteristically upon Sharon Kerenstein. The milk was inevitably hotter than anything she could have otherwise tolerated, and the glass to which she had agreed had perhaps attested to some singular lack of foresight. She nevertheless ceded to the old man's fleeting suggestion.

– *Sí*, she replied.

As the old man poured the hot milk into some darkened puddle, something again happened upon Sharon by surprise. Some entrance reprised could not have been livelier, and again causing Sharon to consider some strangest confluence of events being conceived which were tantalizingly beyond her control. Now being served by some still kinder old man, some later evening *paseo* continuing to flourish on the outside and just beyond the window display which had played hard and fast with Sharon's original intention, did affirm that which was indeed telling of some more dreamlike existence so arduously achieved.

– Well, looky here. Still hangin' about, are ya'?

–Hey, what're you guys doin' here! I thought ya' taught until ten.

Liam was genuinely amazed to find Sharon in the bar. He entered with Matthew at arm's length, and Stevenson taking up the rear staring down and along some crowded avenue toward something which had apparently caught her eye as she gently let the door behind her.

– No classes after seven this evening, remarked Matthew.

– *Ploombing*, said Liam.

– Beg your pardon?

– Ya' know. Pipes and the lot.

–Oh! Plumbing! exclaimed Sharon.

– Yeah, joked Stevenson, Bob's finally havin' his works cleaned out.

The three instantly surrounded Sharon, who had decided to sit on one of the barstools. Some decision taken half-heartedly at best and which she now began to regret, for all it was worth, would incline her toward rising discreetly and only too scrupulously. On the other hand, as none of the others appeared to mind Sharon's previously relied upon posture, she went on sitting and would nay succumb to any further proclivity toward some more on-par disposition. Some more evenly conversed mix of people and ideas need not have demanded any such formality, even if it did cause one to feel decidedly less secure than when they had first taken up the task.

– What shall it be, *amigos*? asked Matthew.

– Coffee neat, said Liam.

- Ya’ mean whiskey neat, don’t ya’?
- No, Stevenson, I *mean* coffee *solo*.
- *Café solo para él*, said Matthew to the old man.
- Neat, indeed ... I’ll have a *cortado*, said Stevenson.

Sharon could not help but notice the old man’s sense of confusion, and not solely for the garble of idioms unrecognized. Some calmer-than-calm inner sense of panic that one tried so hard to uphold throughout had inevitably taught Sharon all she might ever wish to learn regarding some higher need for self-composure. Some dignity outwardly professed would be all too *español* at any cost, and Sharon would glisten at the sight of some old man struggling to withstand in even these most trying of circumstances. His glance at once settled upon Stevenson.

- *Cortado para usted*, he remarked.
- *Dos*, exclaimed Matthew.
- (silence)
- I thought the British drank tea at this hour, said Sharon teasingly.
- Try n’find me a decent cuppa’ tea in this country, replied Matthew.
- (silence)
- So, then, school *is* out for the evening? Sharon asked.
- ‘cept for the plumbers, replied Matthew.
- Wasn’t Loretta still hangin’ about? wondered Liam.
- Yeah, but she always seems to find somethin’ to do, ...thought I saw Gonzalez, as well.
- Gonzalez! exclaimed Liam. What the fuck would he be doin’ around at this time of the day?
- Should be bangin’ on doors, harassin’ the *pueblo* into succumbing to the urge for some finer language learning, said Stevenson sarcastically.
- Oh, is that the way it’s done? laughed Sharon.
- More or less...

– Ya’ don’t suppose Loretta and Gonzalez ...

(silence)

– Oh, for chrissake, I wouldn’t put it past ‘er.

Matthew’s suggestion fell quickly upon any notion which Sharon might have held to the contrary, while at the same time seeming to be invested with some certain credibility and entirely in keeping with Liam’s retort. The girl had usually seemed to exude some peculiar sense of gloating over conquests past and present. Still, some topic of conversation nearly produced had all but vanished by the time Matthew were about to offer up his next suggestion.

– Shall we move over to that table there? he asked nodding to the spot which Sharon had previously considered for herself upon entering.

She was beginning to weary of some perpetual kaleidoscope which seemed to have determined completely her time since taking leave of the porter. Now one more disturbance could not have possibly gone too vexingly, with moving back through some chaos and could have only attested to this withering slow-motoned embodiment of what it is her life would have been destined to become. Some more astute taking advantage of those misfortunes which her great grandparents had apparently pursued, and with ne’er-too-mixed success. Sharon, on the other hand, had been finding it each time more difficult to resist those tides momentarily, sending one off further and further from what had once been some truer course unrecognized.

– Pull up another chair for the New York lady, would ya’?

– There we go. Everybody set?

– Well this is cozy, said Sharon at last.

– What’d ya’ think of Bob’s little meeting? asked Matthew.

– Forget the meetin’, said Liam. What’d’ya think of *Bob*?

– He seems a little bit ...*slow*, remarked Sharon.

– They say he’s brain damaged or soomthin’.

– He’s not fookin’ brain damaged, Stevenson! Who told ya’ that lotta roobish? asked Liam.

– Yeah, it’s true. Huntin’ accident, think it was.

– He hurt his *arm*! Can’t move it above his head, said Matthew.

– Ah, yes?... Then answer Sharon’s question, will ’ya.

Stevenson feigned a certain determination on the last one. Sharon had been detecting some respective penchant for girlish mischief from the start, some naturally gaelic delight in trying to upset any *asunto* from which were to radiate even the smallest modicum of importance.

– Sorry, was there a question? queried Matthew.

– Why is he *slow*, goddammit?! exclaimed Liam rhetorically.

– How the fuck should I know! Part and parcel of where he comes from, I should think.

– Where’s he from? asked Sharon.

– California or one of those places...

– ... all that soon ‘n foon just too much fer the lad, remarked Stevenson.

– They say it *is* quite sunny there, deadpanned Sharon.

– Must be why he came here to Spain, said Liam.

– Nope...

Sharon’s glance was quickly directed back towards Matthew.

– ...married to a Spanish lady.

– Oh? ... wondered Sharon.

(silence)

– ...is that what a Spanish wife can do to you?

Sharon had begun smiling widely by the time she arrived to the end of the thought, and grandiosely blossoming into one more warm-hearted gesture of amusement.

(silence)

– So, then, what part of that city *are* you from? asked Matthew.

– Oh *that*.

Sharon again seemed genuinely surprised by the question

- ...I was born in Brooklyn.
- *Brooklyn!* he exclaimed.
- Have you been there? asked Sharon.
- No, replied Matthew, but it *is* rather noteworthy, isn't it.
- How d'ya' mean?
- Well, ya' know, all that talent. Henry Miller and the like ...
- Was he from Brooklyn? interrupted Stevenson.
- Yes, he was.

Sharon was quite certain on the last point.

- And what part of England are *you* from? continued Sharon.
- Manchester.
- Actually, she quickly added, I'd've thought you'd be from one of those Nordic countries by looking at you.
- Like *Denmark*, perhaps? teased Liam.
- Oh, Matthew! Bedazzle Sharon here with the story of your ancestry.
- Fuck off, Stevenson!
- Oh c'mon, feigned Liam. Ya' know, the one where ya' tell us how ya' came to have that fairest of fair complexion of yours.
- C'mon, Matthew. I'm good for a little history at this time of the evening.

Sharon's coaxing had never been so evidently in need, for Matthew was clearly unkind toward the thought of once again ploughing through his past. Some more gazing out onto the avenue might have been just what was called for, those comelier sensations artily tempting and just as the idea of getting on without the fruits of Liam's suggestion had begun to give rise to some uneasier repose. Matthew began.

- Well, I think it's more of a testimony to the act of persevering ... never turning back, if you will.

Stevenson showed some certain unreadiness toward what lie ahead.

Even having had listened to Matthew's exhortation on more than one occasion could not calm her into something more easily received, some generosity brushing through the seeds of irony which had come to prescribe on who it was she had always pretended to be.

- How d'ya mean? asked Sharon.
- Unspoken covenants entered into across many generations. An uncle of mine in Manchester once traced the family lineage back a couple of generations. Got so caught up in the exercise, ended up spending the better part of a year at the hall of records. By the time he was through, he'd traced a line straight back about seven generations.

Matthew seemed proud enough of the story, and the others were more than willing to let him continue.

- With a bit more research, he surmised that the surname — *Orme* — might've had its roots in 10th century Denmark.
- The thought of his ancestors rapin' and pillagin' their way across Europe ...
- Fuck off, will ya'?

Sharon could sense some envying position in Stevenson's need to mock Matthew, some ever increasingly frustrating lack of profundity having had tormented her for quite some time. Even those circumstances within which she found herself teaching had been considered by her to be markedly inferior, and the skirts which she so often flaunted from well above could ne'er suffice for such a scarcity of things well-pondered.

- Yeah, Stevenson, let 'em be.

(silence)

- Well, thanks Liam. Becomin' a scholar, are ya'?' replied Matthew incredulously.
- So, your name is Orme? mused Sharon.
- Actually, it's *Horme*. The first letter seems to have disappeared over the years, said Matthew.
- No kidding! exclaimed Sharon.

Both Stevenson and Liam were genuinely startled by the outburst.

- It must be that *h*'s have a hard time surviving over the years, she joked, because the same happened to my family

name.

- Have *you* got some family history for us as well? Aw, bless ya’, jibed Stevenson.
- Well, never mind me, said Sharon turning back toward Matthew. So that’s where ya’ got that blonde hair and blue eyes? she asked.
- Seems that way, said Matthew.

Some later evening atmosphere had by now begun to come over more resolutely. Sharon had been willing enough at the outset to let the rest of her day languish into that meaninglessness which she had always found to be too unbearable to consider back home, ne’er worthy of something and more fleeting. But Matthew’s discourse had wandered intriguingly into Sharon’s own and, while she certainly disliked having to admit that her concerns were hardly more troubling than anyone else’s, it would have surely been to her benefit to try and accommodate those longings which inevitably exert some most profound effect upon us all.

- Did ya’ ever wonder why anyone ends up in any one place? asked Sharon.
- Like England, for example? replied Matthew.
- Or *Brooklyn*? added Sharon.
- Is it really *that* important where we end up, or is the past itself just some colossal joke which has been played out on each and every one of us, wondered Matthew.
- Oh, I don’t think so! exclaimed Sharon and assuming some air of remarkable seriousness. I think we have all been destined to be *exactly* where we are.

Three or four more customers had by now entered the bar. Sharon reflected upon some gathering evening thirst but Liam quickly rejected any insinuation that this particular place could attract any more later afternoon devotees than it already had. Sharon’s own thoughts had begun hyperventilating toward some later night time idea, what she would do in her room until dawn and then calling on toward the next. Despressingly might be her keeper, and now hardly had she even considered the fortune upon which she had stumbled in finding her current position at the language school. She suggested some none-too-slightest upward motion as if implying that it were time to be done with this, and Liam picked up on Sharon’s course almost without pause. Wrestingly and quickly abiding by his somewhat faltering attempt at *les façons du monsieur*, the entire group seemed to at once vanish from the brokered terrain of the bartender. The old man simply turned toward one more used recipient as the door was once again let gently behind. There the four walked slowly back up and along the avenue, some cold seeming to have converted into one more sinister reclamation of Sharon’s own. Some completely unplanned sense of not being where one should and

refusing to give into life's ulterior dictums had turned the universe completely against her, some undercurrent of fear lingering ever more mysteriously upon one's own imagination setting, imagination lost and entirely beholden to this higher entrapment which had been being played out unpitifully. Sharon felt the undercurrent reaching down and piercing her groin in some absolute disembowelling of all she had ever held so dear. Playing games on some whitened sandy beach and never thinking much beyond some girlish night time regime had been so ill-appreciated. Memories would have faded slowly since then, and Sharon would have been remembered as having been just that most genuine of troubadours for whom life had transpired beyond that which even the heartiest could have tolerated. Matthew's tale had fallen like some epistle calling out to the faithful. Some exhortation toward not underestimating the work of others whose mission it had been to provide for the destiny of those who were to follow and would ne'er go humbling. Some little expected turn of events embodied in some unintended encounter which should have only gladdened. Liam decided to go off in search of some newer night time relief, heading off from the main avenue as Matthew and Sharon walked straight back toward the school. Stevenson had decided that the next day's sojourn would be far too important to be left to any such haphazard fare (although no one could say just why) and thereby arrived more quickly than the others to her final leg, homeward seeking and not caring whether anyone else had even taken notice of her veiled retreat.

-V-

The next morning, Sharon arrived earlier than Bob had suggested but intent on not allowing such to become something too habitual. She took her coat off immediately upon entering and this was at odds with that which had always been hers, some more prolonged pause until she had been properly set in place. Some cozier settling in and awaiting that first sip of warmed elixir to which was always given what may have been some undue matinal importance nonetheless. The girl's school had always provided some easier access to and from the teacher's lounge, and Sharon had never been one to shelter herself within some tinier confine, some all-too-often misinterpreted penchant for closing up could have only added to one's falsest impression. Kerens-h-tein forgotten. Kerens-h-tein begotten and sub-rendered. Some pretending to be someone she was not, and telling more about the way in which Sharon should conduct herself without bothering to utter those unlikeliest of musings. *¿Qué tal?* her colleagues would coax. *¿Qué tal?...pues bien ...* and what did that mean anyway they would ask. *...pues ... nada ...* Nothing she would try to explain, then remaining politely aloof as some would be far too insistent on trying to attain one's own more basic fluency at Sharon's expense. Some not having ever heard *pues nada* and then Sharon attempting to defer to some more eminent twentieth-century American author's penchant for calling onto foreign idioms as reflections of some deeper spiritual signature. *...pues nada ...* Some finer twentieth-century writer calling out to one's own primordial need for self destruction did sit well with Sharon until being called upon to expound once again. Some hurried arrival to the teacher's lounge with foreign literary expressions having had captivated Sharon from an early age. Much sooner in fact than some appreciation gained through her earliest visits to the baths on Brighton beach avenue. The fact that some more-than-hallowed author had taken his own life in

consequence could ne'er have dulled those tenderer sensations, gentler incidental caresses felt so fervidly against the butt of her shoulder blade as she had followed her mother into that first chamber. Some scent of freshly anointed perfume could have only transformed Sharon back to that moment, then questioning again as to where such a fascination could have disappeared. That one of her female colleagues had exuded such a similar refreshment was nevertheless unable to mask the annoyance which Sharon had at times brandished for the entire lot. Still, she would try to satisfy their feigned thirst for some linguistic *compatibilité* and heartily conceded toward providing ...*pues nada* ... which could not have meant anything at all within this vernacular so otherwise overtaught. Then returning to her classroom would have only provided some more lasting satisfaction as one awaited that rush of youthful ambition, ardent craving upon Sharon in her role as dedicated *enseignant certifié*. Here she would likewise be called upon to honor the pledge, although within some more loosely defined boundaries for which she were soon to become more grateful than she ever might have imagined.

- Good morning , Sharon.
- Good morning, Loretta. Where can I keep my coat?
- We usually store them downstairs in Bob's cloakroom.
- Oh, I wouldn't want to disturb him just for that!
- Don't worry, it's actually for the whole staff and you don't have to enter his office anyway.
- Oh...okay. Where is it exactly?
- Just to the left of the vending machine downstairs.
- Thanks, Loretta.

She momentarily recoiled at the noise she must have been making, some none-too-welcoming administration of unwantedness which could have only molested those pedagogues presently administering to their own train of well-founded volition. Some trying to reach out beyond those linguistic barriers which normally result in one wholesale refraining from those tasks about so dreamed yet so rarely achieved.

– *Tim has gone away.... Where has he gone?*

Sharon descended two more steps before drawing upon all the inspiration she had ever needed in wondering at last why she had been hearing that same question. Over and over again in her mind and seeming to extend backward past some time and place so long ago endeared. Some subtler reminder of that first entrance she had made with Bob on the previous evening and not wondering to doubt that ageless sense of *déjà vu* which had always nestled so closely. Still, here she was and glancing across some newest square meter space, then back again upon recalling Loretta's instructions. *Just to the left of the vending machine*. Why Sharon became confused could have truly been the matter of some novel still unengaged, throughout time and if not for some accidental

glance caught unawares as some shapelier figure leaned up and against the vending machine which had at last brought Sharon around.

– *Where has he ...?*

Some sound filtering down from above had prodded Sharon to credit that precisely where Tim had gone would continue borrowing from Sharon's own personal experience if not for some subsequent realization that she was about to embark on yet another attempt at social penitence. Some ne'er satisfied desire to show herself within the throes of pedagogic bliss, some faraway kindred spirit crying out from within some faceless night spewing indignities upon the faithful few who had attempted to beckon to the call of those illiterate and was about to be suppressed once more by Sharon. Within some wilder night riding did he meet his end nobly. Some said carelessly, but Sharon knew this to be simply the product of one's own more pewter existence dulled down, some merciless carrying forth within some sanctioned going off and about. Some endless ritual of being less than one might and would have sent off flailing, wilder still into some darkened highway abyss and securing finally one's own more furthest away redemption. *Where has he gone?* Then applying the brakes in one latest effort could have only insured some more rightful enclave among those whose time on earth had dwindled slowly into the palms of some place finer. Some eternal dream sleep coveted by those few whose daily nurture had all but petered out. Some eternal covering existent sleepily while being dreamt of and soothing over Sharon's own perpetual inclination toward self-doubt would have only reassured and urged her onto some next sense of personal belittlement.

– Well you're here bright and early, aren't you!

– Hey, Stevenson! Where did you disappear to last night?

– *...and there she did slip away into the coldness of the firmament...*

– What? Sharon giggled.

– Never mind. Why are ya' here so early yourself? I thought ya' started at nine.

– I thought it might be better to get a jump on things, it being my first day and all ... Where was it that ya' had to get *those* again?

– Loretta should have 'em upstairs.

The cloakroom was actually sandwiched in between Bob's office and what generally came to be regarded as the teacher's room. Some unbecoming grey cluttered with papers, books and computer disks did quite remind one of those more forlorn places of suffocation most often utilized out of some sheerest need for cheap office space. Sharon's sudden appearance had interrupted what was to become some easier glance toward one shapelier figure still inclined up and against the vending machine, and Stevenson went on determinedly even after Sharon decided to go back upstairs. Class lists were to be collected at the beginning of each day's lessons, and seeing them on the table did lead Sharon to wonder once again just as to the duties of this most

dubiously self-considered receptionist. Leading upwards once more led Sharon to the thought that it must have been well within her rights not to be divined as such, some more serious professional endeavor must have having had escaped her minutely, in some more unintended fashion and not wishing any longer to be more lessly thought of. Some unfettered ambition had always been poorly considered, and Loretta could not have been more pleased when Bob hired her well ahead of those other girls. Language schools in Madrid had by that time become caught up in some superficial competition for those seeking some underlying titillation, some over-and-above feeling toward one fleeting sensuality ne'er ripened by some long endeared spousal fraternity. Some severely lacking admonition turned inwards could have only urged one forward, and for this those entrusted with recruiting did so always with a mind toward the sublime, some tenderer notion of settling in next to one's most deeply guarded fantasies, and self-serving emancipatory guises beneath some more grammatical turns of phrase calling on. As Sharon returned toward the front desk, she delighted in some foreplay which seemed to be enlivening this Opening English School at these earliest of hours. Some much scarcer version of what she would encounter during the later evening shift, to be sure, but more still than that which she had ever encountered in the borough of Queens. Some such more relaxed settling in might have finally won her over within this transcendental shift which had been hers since arriving in Madrid, if not for the fact that hers had always been some more contrary misinclination and not tending toward that more proper fulfilment to which we should all aspire before drawing upon some final breath.

– Are the group class lists ready yet, Loretta?

– I'll just print yours in a second.

Sharon felt decidedly anxious about pretending to divert Loretta from the daily business over which she had been given charge. Some side-swaying to-and-fro rendition did remind one of the beauty at which was hers presentingly. Some well-meaning innocence, leaning forward and across had scarcely some hours earlier prompted Sharon to lay challenge to those dictums so indelibly established in her youth. Some crying out toward those softer temptations alluring beneath clothed robes, barely visible presence neither taunting nor ingratiating Sharon as her mother would have readied for the warmish ablution into which both were about to delight. Some overly expectant *bain à la vapeur* from which she could only abandon without one's own proper self-sustain and hoping to cry out one last time from atop some gilded steeple – *come in Sharon, just come in!* Then passing closely once again would have Sharon savoring some grace-saving redolence of which one could only recall with queasy intoxication and pleasanter throughout. Some coming down and around had perhaps lent some uneasier justification to the notion that even if it were not for the redeeming, not for some long overdue embellishing of those values and miscalculations placed upon – *Kerens-h-tein* – would she have been adequately remunerated. For the carnal efforts of those for whom time had left so little would prove moot when all had been totalled, and Sharon would have then been left with little more than some aged insignificance incarnate in a life she had never known. Now some loveliest of creatures had held Sharon captive for ne'er some briefest interlude, impartingly of one more reason for enduring this harshest of pedagogic detail, some printing of names and figures hardly recognizable and relevant to no-one but they who might ever hope to hazard swiftly those most irrigate of loins, beseechingly and telling of one's own particular dilemma.

- Oh...I can do it myself if you show me how.
- It's no bother, really.
- ...but I'd like to learn just the same.
- Well, it's easy. Look.

Loretta sat quickly in front of the computer screen, urging Sharon to follow and deliberately. Some unfailing desire to succeed at what it was she would be called upon to perform and even at the behest of some more convoluted scheme which to her went unknowingly still. As Sharon stooped and looking over Loretta's shoulder, she couldn't help but feel that some journey undertaken in complete confidence with her own had offered much more than she had ever expected – *mucho más allá que nunca se podría imaginar* – and Sharon nodded squarely upon being instructed on how to acquire her class lists. Just then the main door flew open and in walked a somewhat determined gentleman, though unequivocally unlike anyone else in her current ambient. His briefcase implied something more distinctly transient, and worn enough for having suggested that one's own tortured *lutte pour l'existence* could have lasted as long as it had. Some nodding barely toward the reception desk did cause Sharon to wonder as to the nature of such a visitor and some air of familiarity which had gone beholden at first. Some air of familiarity which conveyed to Sharon some sense of having tasted intuitively that commonest of birthrights forlorned and might have transpired uneventfully, if not for some momentary relaxation overbecoming her as Loretta rose swiftly from her chair upon completion. Sharon nevertheless struggled to complete the task to which she had just dedicated, some more tapered mindset lurching forward onto the notion that she had not even yet bothered to consider inquiring into precisely where was located the printer. Where was located the printer and some translation across idioms seeming once again to be so foreign to Sharon. This and the fact that the gentleman had made no motion whatsoever toward stopping began to trouble her slightly, more quickly downstairs and prompting Sharon to inquire as to just who this mildest of mannered characters might be.

- Who's the fellow who just went downstairs?

Loretta paused momentarily, as if taken unawares at Sharon's comprehension.

- Oh...that's Jim.
- Jim?
- He's from the Moratalaz branch. They've had to close it again...
- Again?
- Yeah. They're always having problems with the police.
- Why?

- It's the office permit. It still hasn't been put in order with the city, so every couple of months they close down the place until the attorneys can get another provisional permit. It's a continual game of cat and mouse, really.

(silence)

- And *this* fellow?
- Bob's asked for him to do extra classes here while it's closed.
- Oh, I see.
- Actually, you might be very interested to meet him. He's from your part of the world.
- Really?
- I think he might've said so, anyway.

Loretta was not sure certainly as Sharon clicked on the print icon and then continued without really having considered whether she might have at all been curious. Curious enough, beneath some fathomless vellum which had for years had lain insipidly. Some long-held belief that the world would be just large enough to warrant any indisputable discretion regarding some commoner locale did go wonderingly, and Sharon would have been the first to fawn over some ne'er acquaintance having been discovered so incidentally. Insipidly to be sure went her better thinking but eagerly still as she recalled that it would continue being unclear as to just where she might at last get her class lists printed.

- *Where was located...*
- *Where has ...*
- *the...?*
- *... he gone ...?*
- *...printer?*

Sharon began to feel just that much more acquisitive regarding the latter and once more descended to the basement. Some shapelier young girl had by now settled into one of the room's *espaces d'étude*, hardly inviting in and of themselves and went calling onto anyone who might dare to indulge in her very own brand of coquetry. Some lowered head in feigned concentration did reflect the desire for some more fleshened repast, some more curvilinear frame frontally and above gliding down in earnest onto some tenderer fabric caressingly. Not unlike Loretta's own but somewhat more modest and revealing of that minutest of warmed space which has always

characterized some absolute delicateness of female demur. Some alighting upon tasted repose, awaiting the next and pretending to be bathed within something altogether unseasoned in some blander attempt at lingual scholarship gone off to an extreme and unjust prelude to some tryst which would have by and large gone unconsummated if not for some comings on of one so eager to be teased.

- Are you Jim?
- Yes.
- I’m Sharon. This is my first day.
- Nice meeting you, Sharon. I’ll be done here in a second.
- That’s okay. I don’t need any copies, but would you know how *this* works?
- Hit the green and your things should come out.

Sharon had been somehow led to one smaller *rincón* farther and to the left of the vending machine which had by now become her preferred point of reference. Some quite enclosed breathing space patterned off from the softer minded encounters which might thereby have proceeded unabated on the principal stage. Some more cautious flirtation with some shapelier figure now appreciated from behind and one’s own gentler mane of hair draping deftly upon the upper back of one so seldomly amiss. Sharon began to sense some subtler attraction beginning to knead at this gentleman’s otherwise stalwart attempt to proceed. His slightly fumbling manner did lead Sharon to believe that rarely had he ever indulged without some backwards background notion of intellectual inferiority, and all the while doting upon some capacity for unequalled insights provided sporadically at best. Merited attempts searchingly into the bodily accounts of those so pressed would have continued paying towards his somewhat wayward accumulation of adolescent guilt.

- You wouldn’t be from New York, would you? asked Jim.
- The accent, right?
- I haven’t heard one like it since coming over.
- *East* New York, actually.
- Pretty difficult place to live, isn’t it?
- Oh no, I was just born there.
- Well, being *born* is no small feat.

His deadpan humor could not discourage Sharon from continuing.

- It’s amazing how many people think East New York is on the

Bowery or somethin’.

Jim had never been too keen on engaging in some familiar conversation with others who had had the fortune of making the cross over. Some more stifled demeanor had always been more to his liking, some occurring to Jim of that writer (whom Matthew had alluded to on the previous day) decrying those pathetic outbursts of nostalgia, some home having been lost forever to little more than whim.

– The *Bowery*! Now that’s someplace I haven’t heard mention of in quite some time.

– Well, I didn’t mean to...

– ...ever been to that club? *Sheena* and all that – just great.

(silence)

– Funny, ya don’t *look* like a punk devotee, remarked Sharon.

(silence)

– Well, I *had* been living in *Rockaway Beach* for the past fifteen years which is *kinda*’ the same idea, she joked.

– Nice place.

– I taught high school right on the beach.

– Wouldn’t that have been a bit distracting for your students?

(silence)

Sharon had ne’er considered what a nuisance such an outward setting might have actually posed throughout those years. Some ne’er ending invitation to jostle at the water’s edge would have surely provided the likes of Peggy Dooley with one more heartache, twisted loins straddling that last sanded seed which had become inevitably and incapable of any further academic inclination. Some warmed spring day elixir, high blue sky fountain of promising youth overcoming as one more entered the self-indulgent sea. Some further lavisious floating and wading at arms length and calling about to others who had been reluctant at first, but then dawning upon some suddener realization that one’s own later day fulfilment could ne’er be relied upon without some clearer thought for meaningful carnal emancipation. Then upwards again in some bodily waveform, tenderer glances off to one side as she would come back down and upwards once more within some servile rhythm, pleasingly upon those who might ever care to offer some darted glance toward this oft otherwise troubled specimen of youth excluded. What should have been the reason for some such insistence on daily enlightenment? And at the expense of some pleasanter diversion? Now some otherwise unmalicious commentary had seemed to prod upon this altogether unseemly relationship between she and the gentleman with whom she was currently seeming to court. Some kindred spirit obviously spent through the years, some transformation

having had certainly gone unenlightened in these once proud pedagogues. Words slow to react in committing and altogether unchoosing in those verbal expressions which might have flowed there-out did lend themselves to some very near misinterpretation over time, and Sharon thought that this must have just now begun to take its toll on Jim.

– Well no, not exactly *on* the beach, she replied.

– I was just teasing.

By the time Sharon finished collecting her class lists, Jim had finished and slipped out and back over to the teacher's room. Stevenson was busy at the computer searching anxiously, some more frenetic looking through files being disseminated at quicker speed throughout and hardly peering over to see what all the fuss would be about. For Sharon had momentarily stood mesmerized in front of some larger three-colored block-wall structure which had incorporated into the ledgers keeping guardian over some holier writ grammatical testament. Some holier-than-thou telling of tenses misused, syntaxes unbecoming and ne'er unfolding until one wholly inadvertent manifestation rising up from this working class *barrio* could lay claim and still laying claim to its rightful flock. Now searching through the lists for some more proper orientation:

GC 21	9:00-10:00	Fernández Aguilera , Cristina Suárez Pérez, Vanesa
GC 6	10: 00-11:00	Akarregi Ricardo, Taida Dominguez Baltazar, Enrique Rodriguez, Pedro
GC 32	11:30-12:30	Cid Revuelta, Mario Igarzabal, Sonsoles
GC 17	18:30-19:30	Hernández López, Carolina
GC 2	19:30-20:30	Ramírez Castro, Ana López Ramón, Susana García Uberuaga, María Xaparrarte Gómez, Teresa
GC 54	21:00-22:00	Santos Martínez, Marta

The program was much like what Bob had described. Sharon was still further pleased about the fact that most classes would be smaller than the four students which had been mentioned and the mix would be sure to keep her at her best. Now fumbling with the class list while scanning carefully the stacks would enable some cooler pulling down of materials, some more contiguous link to that which she had left behind in the borough of Queens and would have all gone well enough if not for some haste which real or imagined seemed to be pressing Sharon into some artificially narrower mindset completely unlike what had always been her most enviable *spécialité*. Some rectangular pieces of cardboard at once littered the floor.

– What are all *these*? she muttered but to no-one in particular.

– It's part o' the Opening method, doodlin' n' computer *stoof*...
meant to turn 'em all into speakers of the Queen's English.

– I guess I should've looked over the material yesterday, said Sharon a bit distraught.

– Don't *woory* about it. Just follow the script 'n 'you'll do fine.

Sharon considered the script as she hurriedly gathered the materials which had been poured – class number twenty-one present continuous but introduced with some vocabulary (always some vocabulary) tense and the cards depict depicting are depicting is depicting am depicting nevertheless various actions takingly in conjunction with oh nothing that must come much later red folders or even blue. Some she read reading am reading is reading are reading she read *too* quickly and then counting some items one two three if uncountable one and one always as if within some larger *gestalt*. Some larger uncountability referred to and what does this have to do with present continuous anyway just forget it and follow the doodlin'method now sitting with her back and some sheerer white blouse did compliment more than Sharon had previously got a gist of. Then moving on toward requests for things unplanted could I have or where could I get to properly could I know anything at all before some final writing assignment and why would anyone want to do that anyway in a conversation lesson even if it were part of the method?

– Do they *write* in these classes, as well?

– Oh, that's just *shit* ...

Stevenson made no motion whatsoever towards Sharon as she continued gazing fixedly at the computer screen. Her reaction had been not quite as unsettling as it might have been under some other set of circumstances, applying dedicatedly to some other endeavor which had apparently to do more with not having been bothered to adequately prepare for the day's labor. Such outbursts could have been to the daily reinforcement of Sharon's somewhat faltering sensibility, and some consideration of just how fortunate to have become acquainted with one so inspiring.

– ...forget it.

(silence)

Jim was by now gone from the room, and this dawned upon Sharon within some more curious frame of mind, what with all the commotion she had been stirring up unlikelier tenses and that which she had ne'er ever had the necessity of revising at the girl's high school. She might have certainly been out of her element here, and all of Stevenson's encouragement could barely invigorate some fading sense of spontaneity which seemed to have proven indispensable since her arrival in this city on high plain. Some Castilian setting beauty upon itself – first Loretta and then some shapelier figure to whom she had confided quietly, some *castañuela* marking off rhythmically in her mind and distracting from the task to which she had pretended to dedicate. But by then it would have seemed to transform into something less moot – Kerens-*h*-tein – and resting more confidently upon some need for practical self-sustain. Some misspoken office clerk could not have held any such malevolence against either her or her

ancestors, some shapelier figure now eclipsing indulgently any such notion and calming Sharon's long churning breast. Dedicating more and dedicating am dedicating is dedicating to would have truly required anyone in her predicament to be at their very best and this she was prepared to be. Now scanning to the left for one more class number six and some elementary fare might be all she needed to finally prove or disprove her oft lauded teaching skills. Some beginner requiring, some beginner leading learnedly onto some finer career of verbal give-and-take would lay heavily on Sharon just beginning and basic grammar to boot – be being able I am being he is being oh that would be too difficult for such a number – he is I am you are we are all much more like what could be expected from such a group class. Some that is and this might provide some easier respite and Sharon made sure to avoid teasing Stevenson with yet one more rhythmic display, some holding more firmly onto didactic materials this time around and assuring oneself of those basics which she had anticipated. Some this is these and those would give eventually, unknowing and grammars ill-pursued might likewise hold her to some more primordial task of gracing one with some finer entertainment. What is this here and there that is there and those and this farther or nearer until it occurring to Sharon that her nine-o'clock would be just about to begin going off with materials in arm and having suddenly realized that Bob had been unseen since she arrived might be more telling of the way in which any so-called academy would be made to run itself. Some running itself without regard for student needs and ambitions and still some shapelier young girl had also disappeared and Sharon would have concluded that she had been waiting for that nine-o'clock hour all along. Some slightlier preparation but not much more did cause one to preen softly, some awaiting that time when language gestures might be transformed into something more urged upon. Some satin-stained caress tossing one off thoughtfully into some stupor hardly appreciated and thinking out loud within words and phrases so poorly understood. Some words and phrases and words dropping syllables neatly onto some cleft which had ne'er expressed such joy but now seeming to ripen into active repose would keep some shapelier figure returning every fourth night. For her part, Sharon would be on every other and some thought regarding just how she might enter into such linguistic *préliminaires* began to consume her repentantly. Then some regressing and climbing once more to street level would have once again brought into earshot, some not yet distractingly but momentary wonder at just how she would be about to begin. She would have certainly preferred to initiate her stay with something more palatable, some more convergent thinking upon temporal understandings so underestimated by this overly accustomed student body.

- The present perfect can be used whenever one likes in some other idiom, but let us not forget ...
- ... but how *is made* the present perfect?
- *Tim has gone away... Where has he gone?*

Well, obviously, he *has* gone away thought Sharon and why would he keep on using that same example over and over as if to elucidate once and for all that Tim would have ne'er thought to do the things that Sharon had considered so many years ago before seeking out some rightful place at the girl's high school? Some thinking that there but for the grace go I and always hoping that some more time-worthy vocation might have actually saved her from this eternal dream sleep swimming out until

rendering oneself helpless and not wishing to partake any further in this moveable feast which some twentieth-century eminent authorship had deemed? Or was that that other place with frolicking disregard for some lesser pretence of purity preordained and some absurdly mistaken self-righteous regard for piety and boredom? That Tim had wished to stay could have only attested to some nobler thirst for admitting to one's own more human misgiving about that abandoning of those tidier situations through which we would have all wished to endure unendingly and never questioning why. Some reason for being exactly where we have all arrived to that unknowingly and unwantedly perhaps but uncontrollably and thankfully in that one's own ancestors might have pushed on without even that slightest parcel of remorse certainly and assuredly of just how that history of the world were to unfold in their favor with some grateful progeny prevailing anew in spite of those more incidental turnings backward – Kerens-*h*-tein – and some provisional downturns historically. Some wonder of the world and wonder of that newer world calling forth with hardly some littler regard for that inward reach of one's own soul turningly and deftly seeking out some more salacious satisfaction which might lead us all into that more commonplace of rest-assuredness. Then hearing that refrain once more in passing had brought into crystalline fashion that unending remorse of ne'er knowing where one should be or even if one should be anywhere rather that sinking feeling of yearning to be swimming out into some open sea searchingly for some dream sleep eternally. Some *s*-panish just in passing and remindingly of that broader verse so poorly understood regarding some abyss into which we all find ourselves sooner or later, or not so depending on how adept one's own tenderer scheme had been playing out unpitifully. Kerens-*h*-tein forgotten. Kerens-*h*-tein sub-rendered and misbegotten. And who might have even bothered to notice that that slightest of loss which would have been incarnate in that singlet of omission would continue weighing so heavily upon some weakest of Sharon's own? Some looking aloft peculiarly past some more rising member casting forth and out from one's own more wondrously seeking flesh? The choice would have to be hers and hers alone, some occurrence at something more than chance at this precise place and time swimming out or holding on for the sake of one more go that obviously thinking he *has* gone and some further casting doubt upon some more present perfect rendering – *whenever one likes in some other idiom* – could have brought Sharon back to something more pressing and still coming round quickly enough and why shouldn't she begin with something for which she could find some more immediate deliverance properly and correctly? *Just follow the script* but the script is sometimes difficult to follow and not so easy to see how all those years ago she had never considered what it might be like to be set adrift and moving outward swimming out so far out and out further and further until too tired to look back with limbs aching and crying out for more remorse – *come in, Sharon, just come in* with some sun above one's head and warmer and warmer feeling underneath with but two shapelier figures gazing upwards and shielding unintentionally from Sharon's own downwards admiring of softest fleshened repast bringing back those warmed waters so perfumed and longing for it had been ages since being called upon to wither into that didactic material onto which she would be pressed on this particular morning and one repentant reflecting upon Jim's ne'er faltering indifference did afford all she had needed to convince her of some routine to which she would necessarily need to fall victim. Some hello class I am Sharon can you speak English well enough to understand just where it is I am coming and seeing some shapelier figure now in front not one but two where are you from and what do you do would have always seemed to provide some easier mode of introduction and careful not to overplay it as she had that first time with Jim just next door doing past temporal understandings which I can barely

keep from listening in on and he was not all that unattractive after all why had he got to engage in that finer fare *Tim has gone away* but not exactly that which Matthew oh he must have had one of those eight o'clock classes which Bob had mentioned vikings and all that would have certainly put one into some more staid earlier rising then *pedí, pediste, pidió, pidieron, pedimos* was certainly much clearer than all of this perfumed essence wafting more sensually up to Sharon and looking again into some softest rendition setting beauty upon itself and still wanting to enter but not being able to just come in then trying to introduce into some shapelier young *s*-panish girl *castañuelas* am trying is trying are trying harder and more but why I would have had so much present perfect understanding to share just be patient and you will use it hurrying is just so unproductive and probably just led to some singlest omission unintentioned and why would I have made such a fuss instead of pleasing oneself obsessingly over some historical omission which would have been committed out of some historical context anyway. Then doting upon some *flamenco* background how she told me she danced and how long have you been dancing present perfect in some continuous sense and she might not even understand what it is I am some blonde *s*-panish shapelier young girl dancing even though the other is just as appealing in some tightlier cloth still reminding of Loretta where she could have gone is going am going now they seem to be getting it but the other one is so timid and never having had been dancing with *castañuelas* as the first but oh so blonde both and dancing and dancing swirling backwards and forwards as the wind with arms held high in pristine grace unfolding is unfolding are unfolding then coming back down more swiftly and resting upon where had Jim gone just next door just next but he was not all that unappealing maybe even more so than her bar companions did he really descend from some fairer race or was that just some anxiety calling onwards to something greater wishful thinking and then hearing him again in some present perfect sense *where has he* and still the same question maybe Jim is really the other one their names sound the same and now leaning forwards again I wish I could be there for her next performance maybe she will invite for some young *s*-panish girl *castañuelas* am trying is trying to grasp some young shapelier figure dancing and dancing like in some modern *film-noir* rendition going back and moving glidingly across some dance floor as that guy talks to himself in some bathroom and trying to convince himself about moral tests of oneself moral tricks leaning up against who else could have rescued us from some tiresome lack of cinematographic prowess maybe Jim had also seen that one and now consoling beneath feinted guises of trying to be useful but I saw how he was glancing at leaning up against some *castañuelas* rhythmically playing moving am moving is moving but was I not about to change oh it *is* probably time to move on to the next thing there sitting this and these sitting here or there playing on time or making on time just like the song with some shapelier young *s*-panish those certainly seem even more so than Loretta and oh that must be why it had suddenly entered her head of course you could interrupt for just a moment I was surprised to hear that there goes some present perfect I have left you have been leaving Jim cannot seem to get off that one these plexiglass rooms are not that well they are not really but there is not even a blackboard oh that must be what Liam was talking about in the meeting yesterday would I mind working this Saturday not at all especially if they are all like these two leaning and trying to practice up against these and those leaning and there where is this now in questioning form depicting am depicting are depicting I would want to be here as much as I possibly why would I want to be anywhere there or here we all tend to be driven inevitably by some shapelier figure up against here or there oh here is where some shapelier figure might come Loretta is moving away I hope she does not go back downstairs she takes so long to prepare those classes of hers but that was all

she wanted to ask not like yesterday but I would not be able to do anything about it now besides I have these two sitting and leaning inward I wish they would stop doing that so much yes Saturday would be fine oh keep looking at those shapelier sometimes it is difficult when she moves away they certainly do her justice they all wear them like that not like in Queens and why would some character misplaced have disturbed her anyway leaning up and against leaning am leaning is leaning and then dancing I think she must have moved towards practicing is practicing am practicing doing some exercise *here she is going they are going there* she did it so well maybe I should have moved a little closer but the other one keeps leaning up against is leaning this cannot be going as poorly as I had thought with modal structures oh I hope I can get a chance to do that one group class forty or even forty-five she seems to must be coming back to the first now I cannot keep from listening why even bother through these plexiglass walls am listening Jim must be doing one of those looking back turning is turning oh I can just seem to make out might there be some problem oh they did look so as she was and is how much longer could I go on with this even if it is like that blarney master there and these perhaps it might be time for practice and speaking. Some practice and speaking fluently (as it were) ne'er once cooling down Sharon or dissuading from some furtherest notion of what would be right and what would be wrong. Some what would be and what could not would have never relegated poorly with Sharon, speaking quickly *too* quickly to be understood and just taking it down like that band from home not making it on time or making requests correctly oh I should do that first before practice unabashedly could I have and could I take could you too oh just answer the question but then those cards were somewhere to be found when I did not need them they went falling all over pouring into that white blouse did certainly flatter but then she told me it would not be a problem oh maybe she meant that pouring too oh here they are that one with some tightlier cloth wrapped gently perfumed waiting and watching until finally reaching in could I have *a cup of tea* could you tell me *where is the printer* could I *see the menu* could I – oh that must be why they call it the opening school could I *open* could I please open opening *opening* could I please *open* now they seem to be handling the cards properly where they should be and some rhythmic return *opening* open more rhythmic *castañuelas* open return some southern s-panish open blue sky deeply and oh just like swimming out into that self-indulgent sea swimming out further and further until succumbing and sleepingly so one would never have to sing again cry or sing is there any difference anyway now *coulding* could I open could I *could* I *coulding* after could I have *a cup of tea* could you tell me *where is the printer* could I *see the menu* and *see seeing* oh now I am going backwards they will be getting impatient I should be moving along into some speaking and practicing coolly but *opening* and *coulding* certainly did bring one's own up to and *castañuelas* might be made to speak of *she* might be made to speak of *castañuelas* and the other listening and *castañuelas*...

(thinking)

... *castañuelas* settling down slowly over some shoulder lately ripened and what else might there be to speak about settling slowly *slowlier* settling upon some Andalusian skirts ...

(thinking)

... why might she have arrived to this particular school? Some opening *opening* school could have set us all should have set us now looking down upon and one other some looking down upon this opening *opening* scene could have charmed us all but looking down could have given us all could have opened with some opening school how could we sign what could we do what could we just be seated and we'll give you some tests of level some tests of levelling could help could *coulding* could I have *a cup of tea* could you tell me *where is the printer* could I *see the menu* and looking down from above in consideration of some wider understanding broader context how could we sign what could we do what could we just be seated and we'll give you some tests of level some tests of levelling could help could *coulding* could I have *a cup of tea* could you tell me *where is the printer* could I *see the menu* and looking down from above in consideration of one's wider understanding broader context some omniscience towering down upon some shapelier and one other some overly ambitious – Kerens-h-tein – could have never been looking down and there she is there she goes into the opening school *opening* more settling down slowly *slowlier* settling down *down* then above once again looking downwards upon some shapelier figures ...

(thinking)

Sharon at once brought herself round to mind and decided after all to conclude with that writing exercise which Stevenson had so depreciated. Telling tales or telling moral tales of what might have happened while arriving or going oh now in some past continuous trying to recover those lessons from which might have never figured in the present and if not for some more stretching out – could I would I have *a cup of* could I would I have a cup of *tea* could you tell me *where is* could you would you tell me where is *the printer* could I *see the menu* could I would I see could I *would* I see the menu then going on about some pastest experience within one's own more recently digested language form grammatical nuance coloring ne'er and might I really have to review such? Some *flamenco* tellings about did cause the one on the right to quiver in sweetest remembrance. Some coming of age within this pastest continuous construction might have very well instilled in the other some tendency toward beginning to gesticulate at some tenderer age, then coming down once more and settling slowly *slowlier* upon and within some tightlier cloth going off oh what's it to her anyway. Some fewest remaining moments would have been all Sharon could have tolerated gazing down upon some shapelier figure and she received their work with ease upon completion. Now some moving off and away did cause Sharon some slightest relief as she saw that Jim had already embarked on some slow descent back down, some vision of two shapelier figures languishing further did prey upon Sharon's own and saddened until some realization that she would be able to rest briefly before having to attend to her next group class.

-VI-

Sharon decided that she could leave her next preparation pending even longer than the first. It was just one class before she would be able to return to the hostel

for the rest of the morning – Spanish morning to be sure – and the material would be more akin to that which she could manage for a slightly more advanced student. The bar to which she had been the night before was near, and she nodded to Loretta as she went past the front desk. The sun had by now reached just slightly above some rooftops which seemed to line everywhere, some bluer sky darting out and over with every step she took. Some blue font of color and still bluer calling down to Sharon as she began to at last savor that warmer feeling which would continue to garnish each and every midday feast throughout her stay here. Some advancing midday Spanish sun encouragingly of vendors yearning could have further reminded of the intransigence which one's own lifetime would bestow inevitably, and she struggled to contain herself moving more briskly down the *avenida*. Some *los tengo baratita!* could have only harked back to those aspirations which our forefathers had ascribed dwindling slowly throughout the years and regardless of where one might have found themselves. Some persistent need for external recognition gone berserk and causing one to imagine many sorts of falsest miscalculations as if it were not enough that we should have all been so endowed. Now coming down to the corner at which Liam had seemed to vanish on the previous night did likewise remind of the ephemerality to which Sharon had been so devoted since long completing her studies. Some darting about, fine-feathered friend searching out that muse which had appeared so fleetingly and then gone back in wonderment as to its very existence. Might it have been just some figment of her imagination? Some inhabitant laboring upwards along the escarpment of some loneliest abyss into which Sharon had been peering so anxiously? Some more downtrodden soul – *algún mendigo* – and chestnut vendor stepping around both now brought the bar into some closer proximity. Still, she could not have been walking more than a couple of minutes since first having felt that timeless incandescence brushing her cheek, some first rush of midday splendor renewed as she emerged out onto the pavement and some closeness which she began to feel toward that least of all probable locales did cause her to reflect. Some couple of passing moments had seemed to pave a road leading staidly toward her own nirvana, and the anticipation she felt could have only been reminiscent of those earlier days before beginning her sojourn at the girl's high school. It was neither clear as to whether she would ever arrive to that place, until finally coming to the realization that two maybe three more *portales* was all that stood between her and what would eventually become some greater final genesis. Some reconsidering the notion that all were about to be well did begin to resonate as she turned deftly toward the panel glass door. Stevenson had been so agile on the previous night, passing through and she too hearing those fast fading strains.

... *siempre guardan sus sonrisas*
todas son las señoritas
señorita, una vez te vi

– *Buenos días*, Sharon greeted the bartender.

– *Buenos días. ¿...sus amigos?*

– *Pues... hoy trabajando.*

Sharon thought it fascinating that the bartender would not only remember her but also her friends from the night before. Some kinder attempt at gentler

accommodation had always played to Sharon's opinion regarding the local people and notwithstanding any more probable attempt at momentary demur, some more superficial rendering. Still she always took it as some fleeting consolation and why should such be necessarily disqualified on any human scale? The old man seemed to feign some appreciation upon being told that they were currently at work, much as the old man himself and why should such be necessarily disqualified? Why should such – but Sharon suddenly remembered that her time here would need to be brief and she would be getting back as quickly as possible to prepare for the next class. Some thought interrupted would have necessarily required her to request for whatever it was she had entered.

– *¿Me pones un café con leche, por favor?*

– ... *muy bien.*

Sharon settled in at that spot from which she had been seized the night before. Whether out of some primordial satisfaction at finding some consistency or some overwhelming need to become defined as a species, some reassuring design of camaraderie which might define as some species properly stated by that cleverest of gentlemen deep within some burnt-out building in north London. Some strumming up above and did cause us to perceive some clash to which – but there might not be time sufficient for such a rumination now. Sharon thanked the old man as he laid her glass on the bar and began to regret that such discourse having been previously negotiated would deem no sequel, not today anyway. At once the old man spoke to Sharon.

– *¿Usted es inglesa, no?*

His question caught Sharon by surprise, and it was not for the common instance of having inquired about where she was from. Some rather sippingly and daintily holding forth sitting upright upon some quite uncomfortable barstool did prevent her from answering immediately though she obviously wished to do so. It again occurred to her how odd it should have been to be led subconsciously to this place. Some airiness high-ceiling oasis reminiscent of that place downtown, and why should she not begin to feel some instantaneous surge of familiarity? Some wanting to communicate freely with the proprietor for whom she had quickly acquired some intoxicating sense of identification?

– *En realidad, soy de Nueva York,* replied Sharon.

– *Esta lejos de casa.*

– ... *bueno ...*

Some commonly used expression for acknowledging that which yearned for the inevitable – *bueno* – as if just about anything were to be considered to be good in some larger sense. Some more tentative intonation which Sharon had mastered since arriving here and proving all those girls correct regarding one's own linguistic prowess. Some more generic meaning of the word which would have had us comforted more that we might have ever imagined. Some yes thought Sharon and why should it not be good even with observing from afar. Some character misplaced incomprehensibly should not

have diverted from the importance of wallowing in the sounds and smells of what it was she would be doing there...or here...or...What difference could it possibly make to regret the fact that some physical location had gone lusting for and some recognition that she were indeed far from home would have nevertheless become paramount? On the other hand, why and what was to be called home justifiably and when would one finally be obliged to come to some realization regarding home as nothing more than some whimsical landscape? Some roving discotheque enticing dancers as they were to pass and becoming savored solely for those temporal circumstances being there at any such time? Would she have truly felt any more at ease sitting at that downtown place? Some unmistakable ether began coveting Sharon as sunlight began to go receding and no longer celebrating some earlier morning pageant upon the large plate glass window which bedecked the bar's façade against the street. Some changing color did recall some shifting life situation which Sharon had ne'er anticipated. Kerens-h-tein forgotten might have very well been the best she could hope for. Some antiquated notion hardly deserving of some misintended abuse heaped onto the day clerk whose office it would very well have been to purge this fast dying race of all pretension and initiative misused. Some unquenchable fear of moving forever forward would have kept us all at odds with our own ambitions and clenching firmly onto the past as our last greatest hope. Sharon began clinging to the hope that her first two classes had provided all the comfort she would ever need regarding that whimsical landscape, some calling out to life and Kerens-h-tein forgotten at last.

– *¿Por cuánto tiempo piensa quedarse aquí?* inquired the old man.

– *No se. Había pensado en sólo utilizar mi estancia para seguir hacia la tierra de mis antecedentes.*

– *¿...y esa dónde?*

– *Rusia.*

The old man was genuinely taken aback upon being informed of Sharon's ultimate destination. Why would she have wanted to use her stay here as nothing but some means of striving to achieve that which would accomplish so little by her own understanding? The old man seemed to be striving to imagine some connection between this unassuming pedagogue and some loneliest of faraway landscapes cold and colder still. Some unsightlier rumination regarding those more sinister antics hardly conceived would have taxed completely the old man's ingenuity and if not for Sharon's more immediate explanation.

– *Mis abuelos procedieron de allí,* said Sharon.

– *¿Pero ya no tiene familiares allí, verdad?*

– *No,* she replied.

No. It was true that some slightly apologetic tone or inflection would have belied her somewhat already tested constitution. Some knowing already that this were to continue providing her some niche for quite some time and probably causing that one faded character – Kerens-h-tein – to be forever so, for it was indeed true that

she had no longer had family there. Some scrutinizing by the old man had gone unchallenged, and Sharon would welcome any further suggestion to the fact that her initial proposition were beginning to unravel. Some unparalleled submission into one's own most closely held retreat had left her completely defenseless. Some singing on about one's own dancer's delight swinging and offering jest within grammars misappropriated had truly banished Sharon from forever refusing such momentary splendor at the expense of some less tangible high-minded ideal from which only could be attained that most insignificant of remuneration. Sharon stared disconcertedly at the glass in front of her. The coffee at this particular place was superior to anything she had sampled elsewhere, and this too only lent credibility to the indisputable fact that as go those facets of least existence so go we.

(silence)

Sharon Kerenstein considered this more carefully than she might have ever intended, prior to entering for one more go of it and then continuing to play host to those irrefutable musings by the bartender.

– *Mejor quedarse aquí*, he said.

How could the old man have been so presumptuous as to assume that it would be better for Sharon to remain here? He could have never had the experience of being drawn backwards in search of some long-standing bond. His were and would always exude some pedigree abruptness towards those of some more humble class. Some drifting away from one's own uniformed oppression in search of the grand lady did distinguish that courageous lot and in this Sharon would never cease confiding. Alternatively, she had appreciated the impulse which the old man's words had afforded. Some haphazard cross-bearing flagellation against oneself should not have been judged properly nor viewed in any such self-congratulatory light. Some semantic spirit in those words uttered by the old man and inundating Sharon within some distinctly foreign tongue would usher in some newest interval of self-sufficiency. Some well-deserved lack of necessity for clinging to past ideals were soon to lead to that inner peace incarnate within some shapelier figure leaning. Some shapelier satisfaction ne'er pending nor ever gone wanting.

– *Bueno ... Me gusta mucho el trabajo. Así que, quizás me quedaré más tiempo que había pensado*, remarked Sharon.

Sharon thus began to feel just slightly more certain than when she came in regarding the feasibility of her ultimate destination. Some feeling just slightly and none too much more about the prospect of eventually paying heed to that faded omission – Kerens-h-tein – which were soon to vanish completely. Some dwindling warmth settling down within the glass which she had hitherto held so securely between her fingers did seem to proceed from some offhanded remark uttered by this old man. Some consternation as to just how the fortunes of one's own lifetime could be so indiscriminately manipulated began to trouble her at once. Some sadness and dire longing for that security, to wit coming in at last to savor some thermal recompense as her mother led her into that balmy feast would have otherwise been to her unassailable defeat.

– *Muy bien*, acknowledged the old man.

Then peering down at her watch did signal some piercing intention which had always been sacred to Sharon, and with urgency searched for the coins which she would need in order to remunerate the bartender until her next visit.

– *¿Cuánto era, por favor?* asked Sharon.

– *Ciento diez.*

As she paid the old man, it seemed some elderly woman then entering the bar was the same who had asked Sharon for the time following those moments spent completing her paperwork with Loretta on the previous day. Now one's own quickest glance did bring to mind some sweetest reverie which had then been squandered so prematurely. Some inescapable recollection of that dissimilarity between her and she who had just moments earlier been the object of Sharon's own more illusive infatuation did provoke one to consider that she too would someday be prone to such acts of supplication. Now turning deftly toward the panel plate glass door would have only confirmed in her mind some nagging sense of impending mortality which might better be addressed through some tenderer consideration of one's own day-to-day necessities. Some moving onwards did once more bathe Sharon in that warmest of ablutions definingly, some midday *s*-panish sun playing fast with those bodily sensations tending inevitably to impose upon all that would ever be considered learned. Some erroneous sense of intellectual emancipation would forever seem feigned within this warmth which now enveloped as she moved up and back toward the language school. Some shadows defining in ebullient relief those more radiant patches of pavement upon which continued in earnest, and thereafter subjugated to the ever-shifting canvass of humanity which were to become hers.
