

19 Rue Clauzel  
Paris

Urgent you meet me here—stop—Must talk  
—stop—Need advice—stop—Trust only you—stop

Ted

How like Ted, I thought. In the age of e-mail and faxes and telephones, he sends a telegram. Yet something seemed very wrong, completely out of character. Professor Theodore John Milton Porter, the Ezra Stiles Drummond Professor of Political Theory at Princeton, was ordinarily unflappable. But now he was flapped. He sounded scared, suspicious, desperate.

I had to go. Ted needed me more than my partners at the New York offices of Anderson Davis Stein and O'Brien or the clients who sought my advice about the legal intricacies of intellectual property rights in the information age. Could that be the kind of advice Ted wanted? Surely not. Unlike my clients, who seek copyright protection for everything, Ted was a scholar who happily shared his ideas with anyone who would listen to his lectures or read his books and articles—none of which was written with anything as advanced as a ballpoint pen, much less a computer. He wrote everything in an elegant longhand, with a fountain pen—an antique Waterman inherited from his grandfather.

“Works fine,” he’d say. “Small. Lightweight. Take it anywhere. And quiet. None of the infernal tap-tap-tapping that those lap-dogs make.”

“Lap-tops,” I corrected. “Lap-top computers.”

"Whatever," he'd say, breaking out his impish grin and his best single-malt Scotch. I didn't share Ted's almost visceral aversion to modern technology generally, and his loathing of computers in particular; but about single-malts we agreed wholeheartedly. Served at room temperature and with a splash of spring water, each small sip would open up taste buds you didn't even know you had. Highland malts, Lowland malts, Islay malts—each region produced its own inimitable varieties, each of which had utterly unique characteristics. We waxed ecstatic about the smoky peaty pungency of Laphroaig, the sharp tang and subtle aftertaste of Glenfiddich, the . . .

"You're on the Concorde to Paris. 1:00 p.m. from JFK. Better hurry, Jack." My Scottish reveries were interrupted by Grace, my secretary, legal assistant, and sometime lover. A Chinese-American Catholic in an unhappy marriage, Grace Wu would not consider divorce, and I had long ago given up trying to talk her into it. Strong-willed and devout, she had her way. I had to take her on her terms, or not at all. I took her. And she took me, organizing my office and my life. That was our "arrangement," as she called it, and it worked well enough. All my friends knew about it, though none but Ted thought it a good idea.

"Whatever is, is," he would say. "Whatever works, works. Your life wouldn't work for me, but it doesn't have to. It only has to work for you."

Next to Grace, I loved Ted best. He was my oldest and closest friend. We had first met as Rhodes Scholars at Oxford in 1968. Bright, articulate, assured, Ted was everything I was not. He talked comfortably with the dons, almost as an equal, and—what I envied even more—women found him attractive and amusing. Although my junior by nearly a year, Ted seemed somehow older and more mature than most of our crowd. He appeared to have stepped out of an earlier age. The language of our day seemed inadequate to describe him, and only old words would do. Noble. Honorable. Valiant. Gallant. Dashing. He wore Harris tweeds and riding boots, sometimes carried a cane, occasionally drank to excess but never showed it, and spoke flawless French. "I can converse in three languages and curse in seventeen," he said. And he could.

"Say 'shit' in Swahili," a skeptic once challenged.

"Kinyesi," he said.

As friends we were a distinctly odd pair. Physically, for starters. Ted was just under six feet, I nearly half a foot taller. His frame was

compact and muscular, mine skinny and rangy. His hair was light brown and curly, mine jet black and straight. Ted's game was tennis, mine basketball. He was graceful on the tennis court and off, and a good dancer. I was clumsy everywhere except on the basketball court, where my height was an advantage instead of a hindrance, and an execrable dancer. Ted's athletic abilities were well-nigh legendary. He was, among other things, an avid rock-climber and skillful sailor and sea-kayaker. Although I'm afraid of heights and of water that's more than waist-deep, Ted tried, with mixed success, to teach me to climb and kayak, and, with no success at all, to sail and play tennis. And I tried, with markedly more success, to impart to him some of my passion for college basketball and classic cars.

Our backgrounds were even more different. Ted came from an old New England family that had produced a long line of distinguished clergymen, scholars, artists, and writers. My family tree, which was Welsh, Scots, German, and Cherokee, was otherwise largely untraceable more than two or three generations back. It included, on my mother's side, the Wagners, stolid farmers from Germany, and, on my father's, my Cherokee grandmother Della Bird and her husband, a Welsh-born oil wildcatter named Davies (the e was later dropped) who made a fortune, went bankrupt, killed his crooked partner, and died in prison before I was born. Ted went to Andover and Dartmouth, I to Durant High School and Oklahoma State.

My Oklahoma upbringing had not prepared me for anyone like Ted. That he and I should have become fast friends has always amazed and pleased me. He laughed at my jokes but never at my accent, and he always brought out the best in me. Ted taught me not to be afraid. But now, somehow, for some reason, he was afraid. Of what? And he was counting on me. For what?

I felt a nudge.

"Mr. Davis?" my driver asked. "We're here. JFK. Like you wanted. I'll get your bags for the VIP check-in."

An hour later I was on my way to Paris on Air France 001. It was my first time on the Concorde, that high-tech cross between bird and arrow. The cabin was smaller and narrower than I'd expected. The entire plane was first-class, in both senses of the term. Five French flight attendants for thirty-odd passengers, I noticed, as we taxied bumpily down the runway before turning sharply right. Beginning

with a whine that turned into a full-throated roar, the four powerful Rolls-Royce engines revved ever higher. Then, with a loud bang and whoosh that made me jump, the afterburners were ignited, making the entire plane shake and shudder with anticipation. Suddenly, without warning, brakes off and afterburners on, the Concorde shot down the runway like an arrow from a hickory bow. My back pressed hard into the soft leather seat, my stomach felt somewhere behind me, trying—unsuccessfully—to catch up. Once off the ground we seemed to go straight up, as if seeking the shortest route to the stratosphere. Which, I suppose, we were. Then, suddenly, sickeningly, silence. Or relative silence. The afterburners had cut out. I looked in terror across the aisle at an elderly man calmly reading *Paris Match*. He looked back, over the top of his reading glasses.

“De rien,” he said reassuringly. “C’est normale.”

“Bien sûr,” I said in my bad French, and feeling both foolish and relieved. “Merci, monsieur.” Putting my right hand into my pants pocket I felt around for my lucky arrowhead. I knew it wasn’t there, but the reaction was instinctive. Just as an amputee can still feel sensations in his long-missing limb, so could I still feel the presence and the power of my talisman. It had been part of the medicine pouch that my Grandma Della had made for my tenth birthday. The small buckskin bag with a leather-thong drawstring contained an acorn, a tiny pine cone, a kernel of corn, the tail feather of a hawk, the tooth of a fox, and a small stash of tobacco. Each, Grandma Della told me, had a meaning. And because repetition and retelling was her forte, she told me again and again the meaning of my medicine pouch’s contents, until I knew them by heart. The acorn and pine cone came from the forest and stood for wild nature; they also showed that big things come from small beginnings. The corn stood for the fertility of the earth and its human cultivation; like the acorn and pine cone, it was a seed that could reproduce itself, and so represents continuity from one season and generation to the next. The hawk’s tail feather stood for the swift flight of birds and the fox’s tooth for canine cleverness and stealth. The hawk and the fox were predators; they, like their prey, had their rightful place in the order of nature. The tobacco stood for fraternity within the tribe and the prospect of peace between enemies. To these natural objects was added something else—something taken from nature and utterly transformed by man: a shiny black obsidian arrowhead

with two sharply sculpted edges and an even sharper point. This rough-edged isosceles triangle was a Stone Age work of art, a high-tech weapon for its time, with a purpose both deadly and practical—the killing of game or of men, it was equally adept at both. The arrowhead represented human power and our responsibility to use it wisely. This mute shiny stone, slowly and painstakingly chipped and shaped and sharpened by some long-dead ancestor, exemplified the dual character of human creations; human technology is two-edged. Good and bad together. Yin and Yang. The forces of destruction and construction combined. As a boy I would look into its cracked crystalline planes and see my face reflected back to me in its crisscrossing surfaces. A face no longer young or innocent, but old and dark and distorted. A visage so frightening that I couldn't bear to look at it for more than a second or two before slipping the arrowhead back into the blackness of the buckskin bag.

My medicine pouch was the stuff of endless jibes and jokes from the girls who wore charm bracelets and the boys who carried lucky rabbits' feet on key chains. They thought nothing of crossing their fingers or (for the few Catholics) making the sign of the cross before exams and other ordeals. Fearing their taunts, I soon learned to conceal my medicine under my clothes and close to my body, where I could feel it but no one could see it. It was only much later that I finally came to understand that my medicine pouch was utterly unlike lucky charms and rabbits' feet. "Medicine" isn't about luck at all; it's about health—mental, physical, spiritual. The contents of my medicine pouch were really only *reminders*—reminders of my connection to nature, to animals and ecosystems, to my ancestors and descendants. Health is about remembering your connectedness to the whole of creation. Which now strikes me, not as magic or superstition but as simple common sense.

I long ago lost the leather pouch and all its contents—except for the arrowhead, which I had often misplaced but somehow never lost. And when I did misplace it, it seemed to find me, rather than the other way around. I carried it with me until nine years ago. Then, as Ted's marriage went from bad to worse, I thought he needed good medicine more than I did. So on his fortieth birthday I gave him the arrowhead. He seemed strangely moved. I hoped its power, or whatever it had, was helping him now. Especially now.

My ancestral reveries were interrupted by the chief stewardess who announced over the intercom that *les instruments électroniques* could now be used. I opened my IBM ThinkPad and stared at the screen as I called up files that needed my attention. I tried to be attentive. But, truth to tell, I was bored. Bored by it all. The petulant, the petty, the self-important gall and greed of my clients made me wonder why I worked for these people. Why I represented them, or rather, their “interests.” The answer was of course obvious: I was as greedy as they. We were all moved by one thing—money, or the lure thereof. I was well-paid—perhaps obscenely so—for seeing that their every utterance or idea received legal recognition as a saleable commodity called “information” to which they owned the copyright. My old friend Ted had chided me, persistently and none too gently, about the larger and longer-term implications of my work. “The neologism ‘intellectual property,’” he said, “is an obscene oxymoron.” My clients, he added, sought nothing less than to impede ideas and the free flow of communication. With restrictions on communication come limitations on community, with adverse consequences for democracy—and for scholarship. Against his views I advanced the usual counter-arguments: that we were entering a new age—an “information age”—with new problems and new prospects; that without the possibility of legally “owning” information there would be little incentive for “developing” it; and so on. I had grown weary of the debate, doubtless because I no longer believed my own arguments. Or rather, arguments I had borrowed from *The Wall Street Journal* and the trade magazines to which I subscribed in hopes of keeping up with my own narrowly circumscribed but fast-changing field and with the “information explosion” that was now deafening us all.

Unable—or perhaps unwilling—to concentrate, I looked around the long narrow tube of a cabin. The digital readout panel at the front showed the Concorde’s vital statistics. Altitude 12,200 meters and climbing. Airspeed Mach 1.6 and increasing. External temperature -42 degrees Celsius and dropping. I turned again to my lap-top, and thought I’d amuse myself by calling up the calculator function. I looked again at the readout panel at the front of the cabin. We were beginning to level off. Our airspeed was now approaching Mach 2—twice the speed of sound. Calling up the PC’s weights and measures menu, I found that the speed of sound is 660 miles per hour. Tapping the number keys I

did a quick calculation:  $2 \times 660 = 1,320$  m.p.h.—way more than twice the speed of a 747. I tapped again. Altitude 35,000 meters  $\times 1.6 = 56,000$  feet, divided by 5,280 = 10.6 miles above the Atlantic—half again as high as a 747. Outside temperature -58 Celsius. I looked up the formula for converting degrees Celsius into Fahrenheit, and calculated.  $1.6 \times -58 + 32$  equals 125 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. Egad, I thought, that can't be right, can it? Thin air colder than dry ice?

Finding these facts more frightening than amusing, I quickly logged out, closed the cover of my lap-top, and tried to sleep. Without much success. The Concorde is stripped for speed, and the noisiest commercial airplane I've ever flown in. But somehow I managed to doze by fits and starts. Old memories, old terrors, the faces of former lovers crept across a darkened screen. Ted appeared with a quizzical look on his face, and vanished as abruptly as he had come. Grace looked longingly and lovingly at me, and then disappeared. Then I was a boy, playing on the old railroad boxcar on my grandparents' farm in southeastern Oklahoma. It sat alone in the middle of a field, used to store feed for the cattle and an old horse named Dan and a mule called Queen. I was by turns riding Dan, then Queen, and then sitting atop the boxcar looking toward the red clay hills to the west where the sunset gathered.

I was rudely awakened by the painful popping in my ears and a loud thump under my seat. The landing gear was down. I closed my mouth, pinched my nose, and blew gently but persistently. My ears popped again, and then again. I tightened my seat belt and looked outside. I could see only speeding streaks of rain. No sign of Paris. No lights, no Eiffel Tower. Only blackness. This was going to be an all-instrument landing at one of Europe's busiest airports. I pulled my seat belt even tighter and felt in my pocket for the missing arrowhead.

There was a sharp bump, followed by a blast, as the large Rolls-Royce engines reversed to slow the Concorde's fast forward motion. Within seconds this strange stork-like plane was taxiing like a conventional aircraft.

"Messieurs et mesdames," a woman's voice said. "Nous arrivons à Paris Charles De Gaulle. L'heure locale est vingt et une heures et demie."

My French was always bad, but never more so than in France. The translation followed, telling me what I already knew. Local time 2130

hours. I reset my watch to 9:30. Brisk and purposeful businessmen and women bustled about the cabin, preparing for late dinner meetings with their French counterparts. I tried to look brisk and purposeful, but to no good effect. I wasn't sure what my purpose was, or why I was in Paris. I felt cold and apprehensive.

Lashing rain rendered the City of Lights a dim yellow blur as my taxi approached Paris from the northeast. As we drew closer I could just see, for the second or so that the wiper blades slapped water away from the windshield, the top of the illuminated Eiffel Tower, with bright red aviation beacons flashing at its apex. When we arrived at Ted's apartment block on the Rue Clauzel, I haggled halfheartedly with the driver about his exorbitant fare, and then ran through the rain to number 19 and rang the bell to summon the concierge.

I waited. And waited. The wind blew and the rain soaked my trouser legs and shoes. My socks felt damp. I rang the bell again. Then, through an intercom speaker I heard a hoarse raspy voice. It seemed to come from a considerable distance, as though from inside a cavern.

"D'accord, d'accord. Un moment." The genderless voice muttered something else that sounded like a curse covered by a cough caused by countless cigarettes. A long lifetime of nicotine and tar and God knows what else. A blurred face appeared behind the rain-streaked glass door, which then opened.

"Oui?" asked a squat wrinkled woman of advanced years but of indeterminate age. Clad in a ratty old pink bathrobe and black slippers, the small woman loomed in the doorway, blocking any advance into her building. The remains of a cigarette dangled from fat chapped lips. "Oui?" she said again. For someone so small—barely five feet, I guessed—she had the voice of a much larger woman. But what she lacked in height she more than made up for in girth.

"Professor Porter?" I asked in my most polite tone to cover the irritation I was beginning to feel.

The small fat woman stared up at me. Maybe she didn't understand.

"Le professeur Port-air," I said in my execrable French. "Où est-il? Il est mon ami."

Her appearance changed abruptly. She looked less hostile, more human.



"Ah, oui. Le professeur Porter," she said, almost apologetically, stepping aside and motioning me toward the stairway. "Au troisième étage, tout en haut de l'escalier, numéro quarante-deux," she said, shaking her head.

"Merci, madame," I said as I started to climb the stairs to the third floor.

"Je regrette, monsieur, je regrette," she called up after me.

Sorry? About what?, I wondered. Sorry that she doesn't speak English—or that my French is so awful? Maybe she's apologizing because she didn't know I was Ted's friend. Yes, that's probably it. Ted must have charmed this irritable old concierge, just as he's charmed every woman he's ever met, and now she's eating out of his hand.

I was slightly out of breath as I reached the third floor landing and knocked on the door of number 42.

The door opened.

"Ted," I almost said. But the querulous look of the *Inspecteur de police* met my gaze, and silenced me.

"Ah, monsieur, vous connaissez le professeur Porter?" I stared blankly at the tall man in the doorway. He stared back.

"I don't speak French," I said. "Do you speak English?" He looked puzzled. "Je ne parle pas français," I repeated. "Parlez-vous anglais?"

He looked annoyed, as though offended both by my ignorance and my abominable accent. "A little, yes," he said in heavily accented English. "You know the Professor Porter, no?"

"Yes."

"It is so sad."

"What's sad? What's happened to Ted? Where is he?"

He seemed surprised. "Sorry, monsieur. I thought perhaps you know."

"Know what? What the hell is happening here?"

He paused, and then spoke quickly, as though to get it over with. "The Professor Porter is dead, monsieur. I am sorry."

I felt my knees buckle, and braced myself against the doorpost. I felt detached from my body and from my voice as I, or someone speaking for me, asked where Ted was and how he had died.

The inspector told me that Ted had died earlier that evening, just after eight o'clock. His body had been discovered by the concierge after neighbors in an adjoining apartment reported hearing loud thumping noises on the wall. They thought their fastidious American neighbor was expressing irritation because their television was too loud.

They thumped back, and then called the concierge to complain. After rapping repeatedly on Ted's door, the old woman used her passkey and discovered Ted's body slumped over the radiator, and phoned the police. They were just concluding their investigation as I arrived.

"Where's Ted?" I asked warily, thinking his body might still be in the apartment.

"We take him to the morgue, monsieur."

On the Rue Morgue, I half imagined from old B movies. "And there'll be an autopsy? So we'll know if it was a heart attack, or whatever?"

"No need, monsieur," said the inspector. "We already know what kill him. It was accident. He die quick. The *Magistrat*—the Investigating Judge—who just leave, he say that the cause of death on the *certificat de mort* will be 'l'électrocution accidentelle'."

"Electrocution? How? From what?"

"Your friend, he touch the radiator while he try to—how do you say?—recharge the computer. The 'power pack' transformer he plug in, but it have the circuit that is short."

"A short circuit?"

"Ah, yes, that is how you call it. A short circuit in his portable computer. It kill him. I am so sorry."



The next forty-eight hours were the saddest and most frustrating in all my forty-nine years. The police didn't listen, or didn't care to, when I insisted—loudly, repeatedly, and no doubt annoyingly—that Ted had never owned and would never use a computer. Never. But they had already closed the case and weren't about to reopen it for a frantic and grieving American.

I phoned Grace to break the news. She loved Ted as a friend, mine and hers, and she took it hard. Very hard. For the first time in years, I heard her cry.

Would she break the news to Ted's daughter?, I asked warily. Jessica was my goddaughter, and ideally I ought to do it. But I was far away and feeling overwhelmed. And Grace was there, and better at these things.

"Woman to woman?," I pleaded. Grace agreed, and I felt greatly relieved.

That done, Grace pressed for details. When I told her about the "cause" of Ted's death, the tears dried and her voice changed.

"Impossible," Grace said incredulously. "Utterly impossible. Ted would never even touch a computer . . ."

"I know that," I interrupted. "You know that. I tried telling the police. But they wouldn't listen. They believe that the computer is Ted's. They've already ruled his death an accident. I don't know what else . . ."

"Get that machine," Grace said in the low clipped voice that she used when she was hell-bent and determined. "Pack it up. Carefully. Not your usual slap-dash job, Jack. Send it to me, Fed Ex, right away. We'll have it analyzed."

"For what? Fingerprints? But everybody—cops, and everybody else—they've had their hands all over it."

"No, Jack. Not fingerprints. I want that lap-top taken apart. I want them to pick its brains, to examine the memory, the hardware, the software, the contents of the hard drive, the power pack. Everything. And *now*, Jack. No delays. Promise me."

Grace had never, in our eight years together, spoken to me like that. She wasn't asking. She was demanding. Exacting a promise.

I promised.

The French police bureaucracy was like none I had ever encountered. The NYPD looked like helpful pussycats, compared to their Parisian counterparts. I remembered Ted saying that there were no bureaucrats like French bureaucrats, and that even the old Soviet bureaucracy looked benign and helpful by comparison. After protracted arguments and negotiations, including a not-so-veiled threat to take up the matter with the American Embassy, a listless deputy inspector named Bouchard signed a release form. I took it to the basement property room of the Préfecture de Police on the Rue Pigalle. A tiny wizened clerk in a shiny gray suit made me sign four different forms, in triplicate, before releasing the lap-top computer to me. He also

handed me a plastic zip-lock bag containing the contents of Ted's pockets, and motioned to me to open it so that (I think he said) I could sign another form saying that everything was there and nothing was missing. I unzipped the bag and dumped the contents onto the counter.

The first thing that tumbled out was a familiar object from long ago—the shiny black arrowhead that Grandma Della had given me for my tenth birthday, and that I had given to Ted on his fortieth. Apparently it hadn't worked for Ted as it had for me. I slipped the arrowhead into my pocket as I examined the other items. Two sets of keys I recognized immediately, because I had matching sets: the front-door key to his house in Princeton and the master key to the flat we'd bought in north Oxford several years ago as a rental property. The third set, which was newly familiar, were the keys to his Paris apartment. There was a black pocket comb, a monogrammed white handkerchief—Ted never used Kleenex—an old Hamilton wristwatch with a scuffed brown leather band, a bright red Swiss Army knife, a small silver cigar cutter, a military-green U.S. passport, a lemon yellow matchbook from the Parisian restaurant Taillevent, two pink ticket stubs from the Paris Opera, and a well-worn black leather wallet. I didn't want to open Ted's wallet, but the little leprechaun of a clerk insisted. Okay, I thought, here goes. New Jersey driver's license, check. Princeton faculty I.D. card, check. American Express and Visa cards, check. Currency and change totaling just under 400 francs, check. A gold wedding ring. Check? What's that doing here?, I wondered. It was with some reluctance that I unsnapped and opened the photo compartment. There were back-to-back color pictures of Jessica—one as a girl of five or six, smiling a gap-toothed smile and hugging Simon, their large and long-departed black Lab; the other was a much more recent photo of Jessica clad in her tomboy tee shirt and jeans, sitting atop a weathered wood-rail fence and looking pleased with life. The next picture surprised me. Surprised me, that is, because it was there at all. It was an old black and white photograph of Anna and Ted, taken at their wedding. His right arm was encircled with hers, both holding champagne glasses, and each smiling—no, beaming—broadly at the other. They looked so young and so happy and hopeful that I could hardly bear to look. But there it was, in black and white. They had been happy, once. Once upon a time, as the fairy tales say.

A wave of sadness swept over me as I returned the wallet and other items to the plastic bag, thanked the clerk, and started to leave.

"Le certificat, Monsieur," the clerk admonished with a scolding wag of his bony index finger as he pushed the triplicate form toward me.

I pretended to read the long closely printed form before signing it without quite knowing what I was signing, and then carried my packages up the spiral steel staircase from the basement property room to the second-floor offices of the *Bureau d'enquête criminelle*. The large noisy room was divided by moveable partitions that looked like they hadn't been moved in years. It smelled disagreeably of scorched coffee, stale cigarette smoke, and disinfectant. I looked for, and finally found, the lugubrious, bloodhound-faced deputy inspector. Bouchard listened impassively as I thanked him for his help in getting the computer released to me. But he heard nothing else I had to say. My vocal and ever-hardening suspicion that Ted had probably been murdered fell on deaf, or at least indifferent, ears. I pressed my case again.

"Ted couldn't have been killed by his computer because he didn't own a computer. He *wouldn't* own a computer. He wouldn't even *use* one. It would be completely out of character—don't you see?" The deputy inspector with the sad droopy eyes obviously didn't see—or, if he saw, simply didn't care. I pressed harder. "Not owning, or even using, a computer is—it was—a matter of pride and principle with him."

"But monsieur"—Bouchard addressed me as though I were a slightly backward child—"the computer, it have his name on it. You see," pointing to a cheap stick-on plastic tag that read "T.M.J. Porter."

He didn't understand, or pretended not to, when I pointed out that the initials were scrambled and explained that Ted would never mark anything belonging to him with a plastic tag and that, in any case, I repeated, he would never count a computer among his belongings.

"The computer, everyone use them now," Bouchard said with a world-weary gallic shrug. "Your friend, too. He find it useful, no?"

No, of course, no. But it was no use explaining. An American was found dead in Paris. A convenient explanation lay close at hand. Accidental death by electrocution—and from a faulty Toshiba Notebook lap-top, no less. No Frenchman dead, no French machine at fault, *ergo* no problem. Very convenient. Close the books. Move on to the next case.

The more I objected, the more I raved, the more I felt like a loony in a padded cell. The bloodhound-faced Bouchard and others who dropped by his shabby gray cubicle heard me, saw me, paid a curious kind of attention. But no one listened. *I* was the curiosity.

Voices both sympathetic and condescending whispered within ear-shot, in almost inaudible French. "l'Américain," they called me, their tone marked by a mixture of pity and irritation. They weren't without sympathy for *le pauvre Américain*. But mostly they wanted me out of there so that they could do other, more important things. Like talking incessantly while drinking cup after cup of impossibly strong coffee.

Finally I took the hint.

The Toshiba lap-top under my arm, I left the Préfecture de Police on the Rue Pigalle and began walking toward the Rue Clauzel. The rain had ceased but the skies were gray and the streets still wet. Passing cars and trucks splashed hapless pedestrians, some of whom carried at their sides opened umbrellas, deploying them much as medieval knights had once used their shields in the *tournoi de combat*. This produced a faintly comic effect as the umbrella shields deflected splashing water onto other, unprotected passersby, who then directed their curses at these modern but horseless and distinctly non-chivalrous *chevaliers*.

Poor Ted, I thought. He had nothing and no one to protect him. No shield, not even an umbrella to deflect the misfortune that had rained down upon him in his final hour. I had arrived too late to be of any assistance, and the police were of no help at all. So, unable to reach the police, I reached into myself. I saw that I must do what they would not or could not do. Some "person or persons unknown," as the old police blotters used to say, had killed Ted. I had to find out who would want him dead, and why.

Motive, means, opportunity: the venerable pulp detective fiction trio suddenly became both real and urgent.

The first and greatest was motive. Find that, and all else follows.—Doesn't it?

Actually, I didn't know. I'm not—I wasn't trained to be—a criminal lawyer, and I don't think like one. Now I had to learn. Fast.

First of all . . . What comes first? My law school training was of no help here. I tried recalling the good and bad—mostly bad—detective stories I'd read for distraction and amusement since my under-

graduate days. Gone were the amusement and distraction. This was deadly serious. Think, man. *Think*.

Enemies. Yes, that's it. Did Ted have enemies? Of course he had. Lots. He had rivals in intellectual and amorous combat—scholars he'd bested in academic competition, and lovers he'd displaced and replaced. But none, so far as I knew, would wish him dead. Well, they might wish him dead, but they wouldn't kill or have him killed. Humiliated, yes. Castrated, perhaps. But dead, no.

Clues, I needed clues. An idea. An inkling. Something. Anything. Again, think.

Ted's files seemed a logical place to begin, if only because they were all I had to work with.

Arriving at the apartment building on the Rue Clauzel, I let myself in with Ted's key and then tiptoed past the concierge's door. She had no objection to my staying in Ted's apartment, and even seemed to welcome my presence. But every time I saw her she caught and cornered me, volubly expressing her condolences for my friend's death and rattling on in impossibly fast French about lots of other things I couldn't understand very well, or at all. The little that I could comprehend sounded unabashedly racist—about the *Japonais* who had no respect, thought they owned France, were threatening something-or-other, and so on, *ad infinitum et ad nauseam*. The garrulous old crone was probably an avid supporter of the National Front, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, the rabidly racist "French Hitler," I thought with a shudder as I ducked undetected up the stairs to number 42.



I approached Ted's study reluctantly. To invade anyone's privacy is bad enough. To invade a friend's inner sanctum is worse, and a dead friend's well-nigh unforgivable.

Forgive me, my friend, for what I am about to do, I said to myself. Grasping my coffee cup tightly in one hand and my arrowhead in the other, I entered Ted's *sanctum sanctorum*.

It was a small room, about twelve feet square, with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves on three walls. A polished mahogany writing table abutted the far wall overlooking the street below. Light entered from a leaded-glass skylight above and a window behind the desk. A dusty shaft of late afternoon sunlight fell near the back of the desk, illuminating two framed photographs. One was a color photograph of Ted's daughter Jessica. She wore khaki shorts, a red tee shirt, and yellow rock-climbing harness, from which dangled a shiny silver 8-ring. A coil of brightly colored climbing rope was draped diagonally from her left shoulder to her right hip. Her blond hair looked like a halo against the dark basalt background. She looked healthy, altogether American, and decidedly wholesome.

The other picture was a black and white photograph of a young woman I'd never seen before. Hauntingly beautiful, dark-haired, Mediterranean, sultry like the young Sophia Loren, wearing a low-cut white dress and holding a cigarette. Greek, I guessed, or maybe Italian. Who, I wondered, was she? I tried to concentrate on other things, but my gaze kept returning to the woman in the black and white photo.

Her presence proved so distracting that I finally turned the photograph around.

At the edge of Ted's desk I saw a series of books, lined up like soldiers: Maurice Cranston's three-volume biography of Rousseau, four thick volumes of the blue-leather and gold embossed Pléiade edition of Rousseau's *Oeuvres Complètes*, a dozen volumes of the *Correspondance Complète de J.-J. Rousseau*, books by Maurizio Viroli, Joan McDonald, James Miller, Judith Shklar, Patrick Riley, Robert Derathé, John Charvet, and Robert Wokler on Rousseau's political philosophy. Most were signed by their authors with respect, affectionate regards, etc. Ted's tortoise-shell reading glasses and his black and gold pen lay next to a bottle of blue-black ink, now nearly empty. How many bottles, I wondered, had it taken to turn out the 627 legal-sized pages of meticulously handwritten manuscript that lay on the left side of the small table? As I touched it I felt Ted's presence in the paper and ink, and the care he put into everything he wrote.



Letters. Ted was the last, the only, person I knew who wrote letters. He rarely phoned, never faxed or e-mailed; but he wrote wonderful letters. Long, short, funny, sad, sometimes serious letters. I always thought it a peculiar habit. But I saved them all. Read and even reread them. Some still made me wince, others made me laugh out loud. And now that Ted was gone, I'm glad he wrote them. He left something I could keep. Something of himself, something tangible, and more than a memory that would fade with time.

The manuscript in my hands was, in its way, even more material. Not a private letter but a public document. A going naked in public, risking ridicule and criticism from friends and strangers alike. A wager. A dare. The fruits of Ted's reading, writing, and thinking about Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the eighteenth-century thinker he'd always admired, frequently found perplexing, and sometimes seemed almost to despise. "*Rousseau's Ghost: A Study of the Real Influence of an Imaginary Thinker* [tentative title]," it said on the first page. It was, Ted had told me before he left for France some six months earlier, to be a critical examination of the various misinterpretations and myths that had long surrounded what he called *le Rousseau imaginaire*, "the imaginary Rousseau": Rousseau the fomenter of the French Revolution, Rousseau the Romantic, the Noble Savage, the philosopher of radical individualism, the prophet of totalitarianism, and others. Ted believed that this ghostly figure had long haunted political theory and had wielded more influence than the real Rousseau. He hoped to exorcise the ghost by showing the sources and the consequences of the various interpretations or, as Ted maintained, misinterpretations.

The second page contained only a dedication:

For D.D.

I tried putting a name to these initials. David D \_\_\_\_\_. Donald D \_\_\_\_\_. Doris D \_\_\_\_\_. Dorothy D \_\_\_\_\_. Nothing worked. Nothing, that is, except Della Davis, my Grandma Della Bird. A flattering thought, though Ted would have no reason to dedicate a book about Rousseau to my late grandmother. I had no idea who D.D. might be.

The third page consisted solely of two short epigraphs. Both, as one might well expect, from Rousseau. And both, unsurprisingly, in French:

... il y a encore plus de lecteurs qui devraient apprendre à lire,  
que d'auteurs qui devraient apprendre à être conséquents.

Rousseau, *Jugement sur la Polysynodie*

... je ne sais pas l'art d'être clair pour qui ne veut pas être attentif.

Rousseau, *Du Contrat social*, III, 1

I did my best to puzzle them out. The first means something like, "there are still more readers who should learn to read, than there are authors who should learn to be consistent." The second epigraph says that Rousseau doesn't know the art of being clear for those who aren't willing to be attentive.

Yes, that would make sense. Each epigraph captured Ted's point precisely: Rousseau's readers—friendly and hostile alike—had been careless, insufficiently attentive to the subtleties and nuances of (as Ted had written earlier and elsewhere) "this confusingly careful writer, this contrarian master of paradox." His critics were quick to accuse Rousseau of contradicting himself or to condemn him for holding views that he never held. His uncritical admirers were equally quick to accord scripture-like status to his every utterance. Together they had created this most influential of ghosts.

Turning to the fourth page of Ted's manuscript, I began to read, and, thankfully, in a language I could understand. Pages four through six formed the preface, which followed the usual academic formula. Ted thanked Professor M. of the Sorbonne, Professor S. and the late Professor DeJ. at Geneva, Professor Emeritus W. at Berkeley, the late Professor S. at Harvard, Professor M. at Dartmouth, Dean G. and colleagues V., K., and R. at Princeton, and other friends and fellow scholars in France, Britain, the United States, and Japan. He expressed his gratitude for support from the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He thanked libraries and librarians in London, Paris, and Geneva. He expressed his "very great admiration for Professors Masters' and Kelly's excellent English edition and translations of Rousseau's *Collected Writings*" but then added that "all translations are my own, from those two towering monuments of modern scholarship, the un-

surpassed Pléiade edition of Rousseau's *Oeuvres Complètes* and the late Ralph Leigh's magnificent fifty-volume edition of the *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*." For the convenience of his readers, he said, "footnotes include reference to the original French, followed by the English translation from the *Collected Writings*." And then, after the usual academic pleasantries and courtesies, near the bottom of page six, something less formulaic: "I owe a deep and unrepayable debt to Mlle. Danielle Dupin for research and other assistance." This name was new to me. But not the initials: Danielle Dupin must be the "D.D." to whom *Rousseau's Ghost* was dedicated. I didn't even know that Ted had a research assistant. Was she based in Princeton? Or Paris? Or perhaps both? And to what "other assistance" might he have been referring? Did this mysterious Mlle. Dupin bring him his lunch? Or make his bed? Or share it? The preface ended on an even more cryptic and ambiguous note. In the lower right-hand corner Ted barely had room to write:

Paris

May Day 1997

In his interpretations of Rousseau and other political thinkers, Ted had a penchant for paying particular attention to prefaces, footnotes, and other things that were (as he put it) "both outside and inside the text." Okay, I thought, I'll try applying the same approach to his text. The very last words in the preface refer to the date. Last Thursday. Six days ago. May the first. May Day, the international workingman's holiday, celebrated by labor unions in France and around the world. Perhaps, I mused, Ted meant to signal his feelings of solidarity with the working class. That would be consistent with his view that "real" conservatives—among whom he counted himself and Wendell Berry and almost no one else—must be critical of the kind of modern corporate capitalism which he had described in an article in *The Nation* as "among the most destructive and disruptive forces that the world has ever seen. GATT, NAFTA and the other alphabetized free-trade agreements are radical, large-scale, and uncontrolled experiments with people's lives, their communities, and the natural environment." Ted was therefore a strong supporter of labor unions and anything else that might serve as a brake or check on this

most productive and destructive of economic engines. He was a disillusioned Democrat who despaired of our Oxford classmate who now occupied the White House. Perhaps his "May Day" sign-off was a barbed inside joke.

I chuckled at Ted's cleverness. But then I felt an almost physical shudder when I remembered that May Day also has another, more ominous meaning: Mayday—the international distress signal. Was Ted signaling, consciously or perhaps unconsciously, that he was in danger? Or was I reading beyond the plain meaning of the words on the page, finding ghostly "meanings" that weren't really there? This "interpretation" business, bad enough in the law, is even worse in political theory. I was glad I had chosen the lesser of two evils.

I rubbed my eyes and took a sip of scalding coffee to bring me back to my senses before turning to page six, where *Rousseau's Ghost* finally got going. The first thing that struck me, as with everything Ted wrote, was his wonderfully lucid prose. The style was the man: direct, elegant without being pretentious, full of well-turned phrases, *bons mots*, witty asides, deft descriptions of people and events, and utterly lacking in the latest—or any—academic jargon.

"Professors are bad writers," Ted once wrote to me, "and French professors are the worst. Well, second-worst after the American professors who imitate them because they can't write anyway and, besides"—here I could almost hear him chortling—"they've got bad cases of Paris Envy. French writers," he went on to say, "once valued and practiced lucidity. Montaigne, Descartes, de Tocqueville, Duhem, Valéry were models of clarity and precision. It all started with Sartre, you see. Old Jean-Paul wrote like a German. *Being and Nothingness* reads like a book badly translated from opaque German into unreadable French. He wrote it during the German occupation. Unfortunately the German occupation of France didn't end in 1945. It continues to this day. Look at Jean Décon. Damn lot of puffing and blowing. He could have been a great philosopher instead of a trend-conscious *savant* pushing the philosophical flavor of the month. What a loss. One of his critics got it about half right when he said that 'M. Décon is forced to write ever more obscurely, in order to conceal the fact that he has absolutely nothing to say'. I mean, why do you think Décon & Co. are always in the U.S. of A.? It's because they're passé in Paris, and his American admirers and hangers-on haven't heard—or don't want to hear—the latest news from the French literary and philosophical front."