



The Southern Cross

by
Patrick Hardy

I remember his exact words to me: "If one single word leaks out about this, I'll ruin you! You'll never work again!" At that point, he stood up and came around his desk. He was making his point painfully clear. You see, he was a very powerful man in the circles we share ... Dr. Paul Michaelson, Senior member of the Faculty, presently Chairman of the Department, full professor, respected academician, and personal friend of most, if not all, working archaeologists in this part of the world. Who was I? A lowly graduate student struggling to make a name for himself.

Michaelson, and others like him, hold the fate of all us lesser men (whom he sees as somewhat less than men) in the palm of his all too powerful and all too frequently fickle hand. He could ruin me. He would do it and that scared the shit out of me. He was, in addition to all of the above, my senior supervisor at Simon Fraser University and the supervisor's word was law when you are a graduate student reliant on him to pave the way both academically and professionally. A few words from him in the right ears and I would cease to exist in terms of archaeological science. I would not be able to get a job anywhere unless I had plastic surgery, dyed my hair, and changed my name (I have heard of other grad students doing just that after suffering the wrath of incontinent supervisors). Michaelson had already destroyed several promising careers for trivial reasons, if the tales told by other graduate students are to be believed. The world of academia is rife with rumor so I can't be sure it's true but why take chances.

I recall the rumors that circulated a year ago after the sudden withdrawal of one of his students. He, the student, made the mistake of publicly dating Michaelson's precious daughter, Catherine. It wasn't a casual affair. Casual affairs my master could have put up with. No. This was serious. Cathy was hung up on this guy - or so the story goes. They made plans to get married or maybe they were planning to live together instead. I was never clear about that. Either way, the effect on the Professor/Father would have been the same. Michaelson did not approve of his daughter, a graduate student herself by the way, hanging out with a mere grad student. His daughter refused to dump the poor bummer so Michaelson put in a few hours on the phone chatting with big shots at the Ministry - the one that holds the purse strings for archaeology. After that, the guy didn't stand a chance. He stopped getting grants, contracts, permits. His money ran out and the well went dry. Any time he applied for a job, his applications seemed to be swallowed up by the great void known as the National Postal Service. One learns to accept a certain amount of explained disappearance but he probably got the message when the same thing started happening to applications that he delivered in person. He was beaten. He finally gave up. I hear that he is back east somewhere driving a truck for his uncle or something.

You can believe the story or not. It doesn't matter. I believed it and that is what counts. I want to finish my Ph.D. at Simon Fraser University and get a job as an archaeologist. I was not prepared to gamble my career on the off chance he is only bluffing. I'll keep quiet. Unfortunately, my silence is an expensive

proposition for me, bringing new meaning to the phrase "Silence is Golden". You see, in order to save Michaelson the embarrassment the telling of this story will bring upon him, I have to abandon over a year's worth of research to start all over again.

A graduate student's life revolves around research. To get a degree, this is what you get to do: You begin by taking a lot of courses and looking around for something to write about. You select a problem, do some library research on it and then run it past your supervisor. If he buys it, you go on with about a year of preliminary stuff. If all goes well, you take to the bush for some first hand field work followed by another year or so writing a book (called a thesis or dissertation in academesse) about all of the above. Then and only then do you get a little piece of paper with gilded edges and writing in Latin that says you are qualified to work for more than slave wages. By keeping the story under wraps, I must pretend that the year and a bit I spent on the preliminaries plus the time invested in the field never happened. It's back to square one for Yours Truly; that or take lessons on how to drive a truck.

The original intention was to use the information gathered over the past summer as part of my thesis. As you'll see, we didn't get around to collecting much data. It was a disaster from the word "go" but I must admit that most of the time, I was enjoying myself immensely. After I got back to the university, I looked for some way to salvage what little we did get. I hated the thought of wasting all that time and money. Just thinking about it gave me the shakes (Don't ever let anyone tell you that the life of a graduate student is all parties and fun. There is an awful lot of pain, frustration, and chaos between each great party). I came up with a brilliant idea to use the data we had collected and approached Michaelson with it. I've already told you his reaction to my proposal: "If one word gets out, you'll never work again!"

So, what could I do? If I used what I had, I would be committing academic suicide. On the other hand, I'd be throwing away many months of hard work. I am stubborn. I hated like hell having to give it up.

A while ago, I arrived at the ultimate solution to my dilemma. I wouldn't use the past summer's field work for my thesis. Instead, I'd pretend I made it all up and write about it as fiction. He won't have any reason to pick on me but, just to make sure, I'll use a pen name, change all of the character's names, and modify the locations.

Between you and me, the story is true. Just don't tell Michaelson. I'm trusting you. Let out our little secret and my ass will be hanging out waiting to be kicked.

Normally, archaeologists write about the ancient past - thousands of years ago (unless you count the Historic Archaeologist who delights in rooting around in our grandparents' garbage) but to put the story into proper perspective, we only have to go back in time to late 1979.

The day I arrived in Vancouver was dark, gray and dismal. How did I know that was the usual case. In fact, I wasn't in any shape to know anything. I had spent the past five days behind the wheel of a truck while I stared at most of Canada's highways. Five days of nothing but white lines, gas stations, and the dull roar of a badly tuned rental truck. I was wet, dirty, and cold my first night in God's country. I am an easterner and I guess I'll always be one. The damp Pacific air cut through me. I had no place to stay so, once again, the truck served as my hotel on wheels. It lacked running water if you ignored the leak in the rad but I could afford the price.

I got up the next morning early as one is likely to do when the sun comes up and fills the truck cab/hotel room with light. There is another reason for being an early riser. I am a shy type of guy and the thought of some earlier riser walking by and watching me in my sleep - at my most defenseless - fills me with nothing less than terror. Actually, I was already in a state of terror anyway as my first meeting with all of the Graduate Faculty was scheduled for that morning just before lunch. This meeting, a rite of passage almost, is commonly referred to as the "Inquisition" at most universities so I was a bit wound up.

I had breakfast at yet another greasy spoon while I pondered how I was going to get rid of five days of highway, no showers, and stress induced sweat before I had to face ten hostile academics in a hurry to get to the Faculty Club for their two martini lunches.

The solution came to me in a moment of divine inspiration. I think it happened when I noticed the waitress curl her nose up as she handed me the bill. I needed a shower, no doubt about it. If you don't have a place to live, a shower can be a difficult thing to find. There are no such things as public showers or bath houses anymore ... Or were there? I raced to the phone book that hung from a chain under the phone outside the men's washroom. I wonder if phone companies think there is a direct connection between using a washroom and making a phone call. Oh well, a quick glance at the Yellow Pages told me what I needed to know and I was off.

Every city has at least one public swimming pool and every pool requires that swimmers shower before entering the pool areas. I located one such pool that was offering early morning swimming for those closet jocks who like to abuse their bodies before going to work. I obeyed the regulations concerning showering before swimming then passed on the use of the pool. I left the recreation center feeling truly recreated. I had on my best brown corduroy suit (a must for any self-respecting archaeologist), a new tie and a smile. I was ready to face even an army of pugnacious professors.

Abandoning the truck in favor of my car that had served as the truck's tail for the trip across this great land, I set off in search of the Seat of Higher Learning. I was all too soon to discover that what would greet me was not a chair but what usually sat in that chair.

I found the university without too much trouble; after all, it was marked on the city map. Locating the Archaeology Department was another matter altogether. I wandered through those hallowed halls looking for some direction to my fast approaching appointment. No one I seemed to know the Department's whereabouts. I should have left then but I was still dazed and a bit crazy from my cross-country trek. Is there such a thing as truck-lag? I tried one last time:

"Excuse me, sir? Can you tell me how to get to the Archaeology Department?"

"Sure. Follow that corridor to the end, turn right. Go down the hall almost to the end and turn left down a ramp. Can't miss it." I was in business. I followed his directions to the letter. I walked the first hall, jogged the second and raced down the ramp. I arrived outside the specified office as my watch rounded the hour. I had made it with a whole eight seconds to go. I ambled up to the secretary, pleased with myself.

She looked up over her typewriter, examining me for a few seconds. I took the opportunity to check her out. Her hair was the first thing I noticed ... blonde and permed. I doubted if the color was natural but her hair dresser must have been expensive. I guessed her to be about thirty-five and trying to look younger. She wore an expensive sweater of pale blue with a silk scarf to match. A little too much makeup rounded out the impression she thought her job was beneath her. I'm sure that, in her mind, she saw herself executive secretary to some corporate hotshot. But then, who am I to begrudge anyone's fantasies. I smiled.

"Hi" I said, "I'm Patrick Hardy. I have an appoi..."

"Oh yeah." She interrupted. "We're running a bit late. Take a seat over there and I'll call you." She pointed in the general direction of the plastic orange couch I'd almost tripped over in my dash down the ramp. She resumed typing immediately. There was no doubt I'd been dismissed.

Let no man say I can't take orders. I marched over to the indicated piece of furniture and plunked down. I looked around. The hall was empty, I think. Every second bank of lights was turned off - a modern energy saving move I'm sure. I was glad I had a digital watch with a lighted dial though. No way could I have watched the passing of time otherwise. Posters were in plexiglass frames placed at regular intervals down the hall. Naturally, they were placed directly under the lights that had been turned off. I could only make out one, a mountain scene with a lake and what looked like boats on the water. Of course, they could have been reflections from the other hall lights but it didn't matter so I didn't bother to check it out. Directly across from me was a notice board of immense proportion. There was almost nothing on it but I attributed that to it being intersession. The term hadn't really started yet. I stared at the single notice on that wall. It advertised a field trip to the central coast and offered boating, camping, and other special treats. I noticed that it was several months out of date. I'd missed the boat. Oh, well. I shrugged.

I shifted my weight causing a squeal to come from deep within the couch. The secretary looked up. I smiled. She resumed typing with a vengeance. She was typing so fast that I expected the paper to burst into flames. Once again, I was disappointed.

My eyes kept wandering down the hall. The boats still sat on the lake. From there, they (my eyes, not the boats) would glance past the secretary to the closed office door behind her. In there, some other student was being grilled. I wondered what it would be like when my turn finally came. I was to wait another hour and a half to find out. By the time the secretary looked up and told me it was time, I was starving. My stomach had been loudly protesting my neglect for at least twenty minutes but I hadn't dared to leave my station. Typically, I had just decided to dash off for a bite when my turn was announced. Sorry stomach, your turn will come.

I was escorted into a small seminar room crammed with tables and chairs. Most of them had been pushed against the walls. Down the center of the room was a single long table surrounded by the faculty, all looking hungry and bored. Only one seat was empty and a faculty member, I can't remember which one, gestured to it. Another professor, the one closest to me, started to talk. He sounded as if he'd given the same spiel dozens of times and could have cared less about it.

"I'm Brian Hansen, Chairman of the Graduate Committee. Welcome to SFU." The latter sounded more like 'f - off' to me but who can be sure. He certainly looked like he meant it. He was tall, maybe 6'2", and extremely thin. His hair was blond and hung in waves to his shoulders. He wore a three piece tan suit with leather patches on the elbows. He stood, stooped over with both hands in his pockets. He reminded me of Icabod Crane with a moustache. He continued:

"We are here today to find out about you and your background. Then we'll put your committee together. First, tell us a bit about yourself." He sat down. They looked at me with expressions ranging from extreme disinterest to catatonia. I said my piece which basically dealt with my interest in Peru (I'd already done my M.A. in Peru and wanted to follow up some of my research there). When I'd finished, there was silence in the room. I waited. "Thank you very much." Hansen said, looking up from his files. I could've sworn he'd said something else.

"I think your research interests should fit in here. You'll need a committee of three people. Your academic supervisor will have to be Dr. Paul Michaelson. He's the only one working in that area." I looked around expectantly. "He isn't here ... He's at a conference in the states. The rest of your committee will be decided later, after you talk to Dr. Michaelson. Any questions? No. Good. Thank you for coming."

I got up and left after muttering suitable 'thank you's and other trite graduate student phrases. I'd travelled 3,000 miles at breakneck speed under bone crushing conditions to arrive on time for this meeting and it was over in less than fifteen minutes. In fact, the amount of time they had actually spent talking to me was less than two minutes. The rest of the time had been my speech.

Shaking my head, I made my way to the cafeteria. Without paying much attention, I selected a lunch from among the various offerings. I paid and chose a table. As I ate, I began to feel better. There were people around too and that helped lift my spirits. I refilled my coffee cup and lit up a cigarette.

"Hey! You're one of the new guys in Archaeology, aren't you?" A big guy was standing over my table. I nodded.

"Thought so." He said as he sat down across from me. "Thought so. My name's Jack...Jack Wilks. B'n here 'bout two years now...feels like forever but..." He shrugged. I waited for him to go on but apparently it was my turn. I thought for a moment. Maybe if I kept my mouth shut, this massive character would go away. I somehow doubted it.

"Patrick Hardy," I began. "I just got into town. Met with the faculty this morning."

"Ha! I knew it. I knew it." He had a dreadful habit of repeating himself (a habit that never ceased to annoy me).

"Where ya from? Where..." I jumped in before he could say it again.

"Back east. Did my M.A. at Trent."

"You look like an easterner. Confidentially, I'm one too. Went to Mac, McMaster. You know...it's in Hamilton."

"Yeah. I visited there once. Had to leave. I couldn't stand the smell." I wanted to get rid of this turkey. I had things to do, places to go, people to see. Unfortunately my plan didn't work. He just started to laugh, spraying coffee all over the remains of my lunch. I stared at the droplets as they mixed with the grease and gravy. He was still laughing when two more students came up. The place was beginning to get just a bit crowded but it was midafternoon, time for the coffee break during which most students decide to skip the last class of the day in favour of visits with other students. When looking for someone who is supposed to be in class, try the cafeteria. Chances are, he'll be there working on his fourth or fifth coffee. Jack stopped sputtering long enough to introduce us:

"Brian, Larry. Meet Pat. He's an easterner, an easterner. Hates Mac. Thinks it stinks too much." He broke up again. It was some time before he calmed down so most of what followed was accompanied by a chorus of guffaws interspersed with choking and hacking.

"Patrick", I corrected because I hate the shortened version of my name. I still curse my Irish father for giving it to me although I must admit he has always called me Patrick. Naturally, my correction was to no avail.

"Well Pat, you here for your M.A. or Ph.D.?" Started Brian making an effort to be sociable. That wasn't easy given the squeals and chuckles coming from Jack's corner. I repeated that I had come for my doctorate and so the conversation went. Brian was about my height, 5'10", a little overweight with a rounded face mostly hidden by the full beard that has become a prerequisite for archaeologists. The lack of female graduate students in archaeology has nothing to do with interest or skill. They just can't grow beards. Archaeologists must be hairy folk or they just don't count.

I discovered over the course of our conversation that he was into archaeometrics - a sort of combination of archaeology and physics. He was

reconstructing prehistoric diets by calculating certain elemental proportions in human bones. Of course, in order to do that, he has to grind up the bone and liquify it before he begins his analyses. Just another of those grisly things we archaeological scientists do. Actually, the work is not all that disgusting. It's even fun on occasion but it does tend to gross out any non-archaeological friends, not that we have many of them.

Through most of our conversation, Larry sat quietly listening. Whether he was listening to us or the voices in his head is a moot point. All of my attempts to find out what he was all about tended to be less than successful. He was tall, thin, and clean shaven. That last observation led me to suspect that he was not in the Archaeology Department. Later, I was to find out that he was indeed a budding archaeologist but had shaven the beard for the 'inquisition'. He had met with the faculty earlier than I had and been in a state of shock ever since. He had been told to take several undergraduate courses to make up some suspected deficiencies in his background. He had not expected such a humbling experience. It was not his last nor anyone else's for that matter.

To speed things up a bit, I finally got away from my new friends and went house hunting. I found a place, moved in and said farewell to my cross-country chariot/hotel. I occupied myself over the next few days with organizing my apartment and wading through the traditional bureaucratic red tape of registration. Incidentally, that included signing up for two courses, one of which was later to provide me with a humbling experience.

The weeks went by quite quickly and a month had passed before I finally met the man who was to be my supervisor and mentor for the next few years - Michaelson. I was summoned to his office by a curt note that read: "I want to see you asap - R.M.". It took me two days to find out who the hell R.M. was. Our first meeting did not start well.

"It's about time, Hardy. I put that note in your mailbox a week ago."

It had only been three days but luckily, I decided to keep my mouth shut. As he launched into his introductory speech, I took the opportunity to look him and his office over. I judged him to be about 50 to 55 years old. He dressed 1960's style in a medium grey suit and school tie - the University of Arizona. His hair was grey and his shirt white. He was pale but then who wasn't in God's country. He slouched back in his chair with both hands under his chin and stared out the window as he spoke. His office looked more like a library storage room than anything else. Books, reprints and papers stood in piles everywhere. His desk was invisible under the paper mountain. One got the impression that if he slid any lower in his chair, he too would vanish.

He went on for twenty minutes on the benefits of being at this university...how the next few years should be the best of my life, etc. It sounded to me like the usual P.R. hype so I really didn't listen. I almost missed the end and it took several seconds to figure out that he had asked me a question and a couple more to reconstruct what it was. Luckily, he assumed I had taken the time to order my thoughts. He had asked what I planned to do for my dissertation. I stalled by giving some of my background so that I could get my act together before saying something stupid.

"Well. I did my M.A. on some sites in the mountains of northern Peru. We located a fairly complex pre-Inca political unit similar to a small state. We didn't have time to dig there so all of the data came from what was above the ground." I was ready with my proposal so I jumped in, mentally crossing my fingers.

"I want to go back to that area and excavate part of that state's capitol city. There is tremendous potential for reconstructing the development of that area as well as social and political structures. The main site is..."

"There any Inca sites there?"

"Well,..." I was disturbed by the interruption. "Yes, but only one. The Inca had just set up an outpost when the Spanish arrived. They seem to have had little effect on the area..."

"I'm looking for a good Inca site to work on. All of the really good ones have been dug already. How big is it?"

"Only about half an acre, Sir. But the capitol I want to work on is over twenty acres in size." He hadn't heard that last bit. I didn't like the direction his train of thought was going.

"Hmmm...pretty small but maybe it has potential. Got any photos?"

"A couple."

"Okay. Come over to my place for dinner this evening around seven. Bring the photos. In the meantime, think about what we could do with that site."

"But..."

"Oh, taking any courses?" I nodded. "Good, good. See you tonight."

Over time, I got used to abrupt dismissal but, at this point, it still rankled. He had ignored everything I'd said after the word "Inca". I had an awful feeling that my proposed project had just died. The funeral was scheduled for the same evening. In passing, I wondered if Michaelson was Jewish.

As I predicted, my project went down in flames and from the ashes rose the idea that he and I would work together on a large excavation of that Inca outpost. He would, of course, not listen to me when I tried to tell him that the site was on top of a steep hill far from any modern settlement. The living arrangements were going to be horrendous but he didn't care - that was my job, not his. I did manage to convince him to allow me to do a little work at my capitol but only in terms of gathering comparative data for HIS Inca project.

There was one enjoyable aspect of that evening. Michaelson had invited another dinner guest, an undergraduate by the name of Jane. She had expressed an interest in working in South America and so had won his approval. Michaelson still thinks that any research done north of the Panama Canal is small potatoes. Anyway, once it became apparent that I would be running the Peruvian project for the old man, Jane was very friendly. I thought later that perhaps she was my reward for being a good little grad student and agreeing to work on that Inca site. I'll never know. I tried to tell her that the whole thing was only in the planning stages but she persevered. So, who am I to argue? I invited her over for a drink after the dinner and she accepted. We were to discuss the project and Andean archaeology but we didn't get around to it.

As I poured the drinks, she checked out my record collection and put on some light classical stuff. I sat beside her and wondered whether or not to make

a pass. Her hand sliding up the inside of my thigh answered the question. We kissed and moved closer. Her skin was warm to the touch and very inviting. Her blouse came off easily and so did her skirt. Her bra and panties were both pale yellow and went well against her dark tan. She backed away for me so I could get a better view. The rest I leave to your imagination. Neither of us slept much that night and, by the time she left, she was under the impression that a position on my crew was assured. I didn't burst her bubble. God knows I've had enough of my own wasted.

Over the next few weeks, I met the rest of the SFU gang. One couldn't help it given that most of us shared a large room known as the Grad Lab. It was rectangular, about 50 by 30 feet and contained fourteen desks surrounded by barriers. Each person had one desk, a bookshelf, a chair and a filing cabinet. If you were lucky enough, or stayed long enough, you got an extra table. They were in big demand as there were only four of them. I, being the newest kid on the block, got the desk by the door. Lucky me. I got to answer the phone when it rang, which was fairly often, and got to chat with anyone who came by. You would not believe the traffic around my desk. I got very little work done there but I hold the world record for being asked to go to the cafeteria for coffee. I generally arrived earlier than the rest so that when Brian and Jack showed up at 8:00 a.m., we went for coffee. Eric usually got in around 9:00; coffee #2. Larry and some others pulled in at 10:00; coffee #3. By the time John showed up, I was coffeed out and usually turned him down. He probably thought I was a snob but no matter.

Now, going for coffee can be a very useful exercise. People are relaxed and like to talk. Since all we have in common are archaeology and the department, those were the usual subjects. It's amazing how much dirt has been slung under the guise of idle conversation. I acquired enough information in a few short weeks to enable me to make a decent living on blackmail should I have wanted to. I would not be surprised if a few of the other students supplemented their incomes that way.

In that first semester, I dropped out of one course on faunal analysis (the study of animal bones), over a disagreement with the instructor. He, Mark Cartwright, was one negative son of a bitch who hated all archaeologists except those who worked with bones. Since I was not one of the latter, his hatred extended to me. At every turn, he tried to block my progress. His favorite trick, and one I must admit I fell for, was to advise a student one way before a paper or an exam and then change his mind as he marked the paper/exam. He told me that I didn't need to know how a certain formula was calculated for a mid-term exam. Subsequently, the exam involved the use of that formula to the exclusion of all else. When I got the mark back, I stormed to his office to argue with him. He just laughed. So, I gave up on the course and on him. He did not forget me however and I later heard that I had been added to his shit list. If he hadn't quit the department a short time later, he would have tried to give me the shaft. You see, his list was on a roll of toilet paper hung on the back of his office door. If your name was on it, he made a point of showing up for your thesis defense and doing his best to destroy his target. Frequently, he succeeded. I hear he is now growing grapes in southern California...Thank God.

A major social event ends the fall semester at SFU. It is common knowledge that one's year end evaluation, the one that must read 'satisfactory' or you find yourself job hunting, is conducted after this event and if you missed it (the event that is), the likelihood of a positive review faded. No reason on earth short of your own death is good enough for missing Dr. Michaelson's annual Christmas party. I, as his NEW student, occupied a special place in that I had to be available to show off to colleagues, friends, acquaintances, etc. - his not mine. All night, or most of it, I sat near him. I'm sure he saw it as 'sitting at the feet of the master'. I saw it as the ultimate in boredom. I would rather have sat through a twelve hour lecture on Structural Materialism taught by Levi-Strauss. God, I was bored, not to mention tired, hungry, lonely and all that.

I behaved admirably however. Shaking hands when required ...nodding in agreement as necessary. I felt like a mechanical doll. Oh, if it were only so...it wouldn't have hurt so much to hear the good professor repeat time after time how he and I were going to Peru to excavate a great Inca site in the mountains. I tried repeatedly to remind him that the site was only an outpost, a way station used by runners carrying messages back and forth to the capitol. He brushed me aside each time. He was not about to dump his fantasy about making it into the big time of archaeology by doing a number on an important Incan site.

Finally, at 1:30, Paul passed out and I was free. I needed to stretch my legs so I set off to explore the house. It was a large, rambling structure with multiple levels and what seemed like an infinite number of entrances and exits. I wandered up the main stairs and found myself in the master bedroom. It, like the rest of the house, was large and crowded with stuff any museum curator would kill for. The bed was 17th Century teak. Above it, on the wall were Navaho rugs of early vintage, not the modern variety but the true handwoven worth-a-fortune

type. On either side of the rugs were Iroquois ceremonial masks. The dressers flanked a walk-in closet larger than my apartment. I don't recall much about that part of the room because my eyes were immediately drawn to a massive funerary jar standing near the closet door. It was truly Inca, intricately painted with tenon heads jutting out just below the neck. In all, it had to be three feet tall and two in diameter at least. More important than size, the thing was complete, uncracked, unmarred, as fresh as the day it was made. I took a closer look. I had never seen one so well preserved. Those huge ceramic jars were used to bury nobles in during the early Inca period and are quite rare. I don't think there are more than four in museums around the world. They are priceless and Michaelson had one parked in his bedroom. I was truly impressed.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" I damn near jumped into it. Michaelson's wife was standing in the doorway examining me the way I had been studying the jar.

"Sorry." I apologized, "I was looking at the jar. I've never seen one like it."

"It has that effect on many people. Paul picked it up a few years ago in Cuzco, before they changed the Antiquities Laws." She laughed and I flinched. The sound reminded me of a chainsaw connecting with a nail. It set my teeth on edge. She swayed a little as she laughed and I could see she was more than a little drunk.

"Tell me, how do you like SFU?"

I could tell she was just making conversation. My sixth sense told me to get the hell out of there. Maybe it was the way she was looking at me but I got real nervous. I mumbled something about having to meet a friend downstairs and squeezed past her. She didn't move.

I took a wrong turn somewhere; she had rattled me a bit. I passed two or three closed doors and what seemed like dozens of people. Down a few steps and there was a den and the inevitable wall-to-wall antiquities. A few more stairs and, damn, I was in the basement. A pool table dominated the room and despite the crowds, a couple of students were trying to play a game. I watched for a second and thought they did quite well given that neither of the players were sober enough to see the ends of their cues, let alone the balls. I pushed and shoved my way to another set of stairs. No one noticed, including the girl whose drink I managed to spill. Up the stairs and I was, at last, in familiar territory. I collected my coat, took a quick look at Michaelson - he was snoring - and beat it. By 3:00 a.m., I was home and asleep. The quiet of my apartment was wonderful. I dreamt of the funerary jar and the noble who had once been stuffed into it. I remember observing that men of that time had to have been a good deal shorter than modern man. Still, the jar would've been tightly packed. I know it's silly but it was a dream. Thank God it didn't dissolve into a nightmare. I would not relish being packed in a jar like some dill pickle.

I visited my folks over the Christmas holidays. The snow in our backyard and the crisp Ontario winter mornings more than made up for all of the 'when are you going to get a job' discussions with my Dad. He's a good guy and I know he was only half serious. His idea of higher education, or so he says, is finishing high school. He only got to Grade eight. I returned to Simon Fraser refreshed and resolved to have it out with Michaelson. He had to listen to my ideas concerning

the upcoming field season. Ha! I had a speech prepared, fat lot of good it did me. I never did get around to using it. I should have considering the way things turned out.

After a few weeks of relative quiet, I was summoned to Michaelson's office.

"I got your note, Paul. What's up?"

"Congratulations Patrick." He rose and shook my hand. I got real nervous because I didn't have the foggiest notion of what the Christ he was talking about. My gut said it wasn't going to be good for me.

"T-t-thanks...but what for?" I stammered.

"I just got a telex from the SSHRC in Ottawa and they have decided to grant your request for funds. We are going to Peru to work on the Carabamba site and you are going to be the senior researcher. How's that?" He stood and looked at me expectantly.

"I never submitted a grant request to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Paul."

"I know. I did, Patrick. I wrote up a proposal to excavate that Inca site and signed your name. I wanted to make sure that the site got the right image put forward. You would have down played the importance of that site but then we wouldn't have gotten enough money. We need the big bucks to dig the site properly. I told them what you told me but without your hedging and conservatism. The site is possibly a long lost capitol of an outlying Inca state and so I told them that. They are giving us - you - a lot of money and they expect big things, my boy, big things."

I was flabbergasted. Paul Michaelson, well respected academic, had really screwed up. He had taken what I had told him about the pre-Inca sites (my major interest) and applied them to a piddly little Inca way station site. He had gone crazy and what's worse, he had told this fabrication to the Money People in the Federal Government. Even more bizarre, they had bought it. How much had they paid for it?

"Paul, how much of a grant did we get?" I asked somewhat timidly.

"\$200,000.00, Patrick. Divided over three years. Plus..." He paused for effect. I held my breath.

"Plus, they have guaranteed publication of the book of the Century that you and I are going to write. We are going to be famous. Isn't that great??!"

I was drenched in sweat by then. Two hundred thousand dollars and a book contract, based on erroneous information supplied by a decidedly deranged professor who had delusions of grandeur. Boy, were we in deep shit. I couldn't talk. My tongue felt a yard wide. I guess I went into shock but Paul was too much in his glory to even notice. As I slunk out of the room, he yelled after me that I should relax and celebrate. I was numb. I wanted to hide. In a short time though, I started to feel better because I had decided to drop out and get as far away as I possibly could. Maybe another university would take me on. I stopped at the library to look at the requirements for admission to a few other universities when the nagging feeling in my gut came back. What had Michaelson said?

"Congratulations, Patrick...They have decided to grant YOUR request for funds."

That son of a bitch!! He wasn't totally crazy yet. He had signed my name to the proposal. It was my project they were funding, not his. I laughed out loud and a few students glared at me. That son of a bitch. He had his dream of fame but if the thing turned into a nightmare, it would belong to me. I put the calendars away and headed home. I had some serious thinking to do and you can't do that at a university. I had to figure out how the hell I was going to survive this mess. I had to admit that Paul had me in an almost perfect box. I was committed both as his graduate student and as a grant holder. I couldn't get out of it without forfeiting my career. My five-day experience as a truck driver served as a solid reminder that I was not any good at anything else except archaeology. I had to go through with it and somehow work it so that I wasn't badly burned by it. I shook my head. I was undoubtedly in deep shit.

It took many long hours but preparations were well underway. I had acquired the equipment and supplies we would need and had them crated. With any luck at all, those crates would be waiting for us at our contact's house in Trujillo. I wasn't counting on it though. Remember, I'd been there before and I knew our contact well. Genaro, a draftsman and field boss was also an out and out crook. He would steal all of the valuable equipment before we got there and blame the airline folk. Now, the baggage handlers are never completely without blame but Genaro was an expert. That is why I sent only the junk down by crate. The rest of the stuff, the essentials, will stay with me. I will hand carry it to our destination.

As we approached the departure date, Michaelson and I decided to have the selected crew members assemble for a meeting. I would get a chance to fill them in on our project and their duties, etc.,. Michaelson issued the appropriate invitations, royal commands, couched in his usual diplomatic terms. I busied myself with the last minute preparations and almost forgot about the meeting. I rushed to his office at the appointed time. He was waiting for me but, thank God, he was in a good mood. As we walked down the hall to the seminar room, he chatted about the Inca site and its tremendous potential. I had given up trying to convince him otherwise. I just bit my tongue.

We entered the room and he immediately launched into a speech. He hadn't even bothered to make sure all of the people were there. He just assumed that since he commanded it, it will be done.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to embark on an exciting research project. Before we go, there is much you need to know. First, this is Patrick Hardy, my Ph.D. student. He will be running this project." I nodded acknowledgement.

"There will be a couple of other people joining us in Peru but you represent the SFU contingent. Now, Patrick, here is your crew." He paused full of pride.

"Peter James, M.A. from U. of C....Comes highly recommended." Peter rose to his full height of 6'1". It struck me that athletic scholarships must've helped him a bit. We shook hands, each mumbled something unintelligible. He sat back down and Michaelson continued the introductions.

"Judy Hargrove, undergraduate. Done some work with Peterson back at the Provincial Museum."

"Just cataloguing and that sort of stuff. I don't have much field experience. I'm really glad you and Dr. Michaelson are letting me go along." As I shook her hand, it occurred to me that I should correct her misconception. I had nothing to do with the crew selection. My mind started to wander back to my helpless situation and I almost missed the significance of the last crew member.

"...is my daughter, Catherine. She's doing her Ph.D. in Maine, you know. Just goes to show you that archaeology runs in the blood."

"Dad, don't be so silly. Hi, Pat. I've heard a lot about you..." Leaving that hanging, she stepped forward to take my hand. She was sharp. She could handle her old man with the least effort. Apparently, in his eyes, she could do no wrong. She was wearing blue jeans that fit like a kid glove and a T-shirt that was even tighter. The material stretched over her breasts and folded underneath like a second skin. The nipples stood out proudly from the fabric. I felt like saluting. I looked up into her eyes and discovered she'd been checking me out as well. I think we were both pleased.

"I'm looking forward to working closely with you this summer." Did she place a little too much emphasis on the word 'closely' or was I just reading what I wanted to hear into her words. I replied:

"It should be most interesting." I tried to sound noncommittal for the benefit of the rest of the crew. I was also acutely aware of the rumors about the former archaeologist/ current truck driver who had been involved with the daughter of the man who is in complete control of my destiny. Did I mention that I am also a coward?

I shook off my fantasies and began to provide the necessary background on the project and the area we would be working in. I have to admit that I waxed elegant and did carry on a bit. I love the mountains of Peru and once I get talking about them, I don't know when to shut up. I described the climate, the topography and the people. After a bit, I calmed down and started listing responsibilities. Peter and one of the others were to handle much of the excavation. Catherine was to conduct the survey and mapping details. Jane and the remainder of the crew from other universities were to be general slaves doing everything.

"That's about it unless there are some questions." I paused and looked around. Before anyone could ask, Michaelson was on his feet.

"Good, Patrick. I've got to run. See you in my office tomorrow?"

"Right." I agreed as he headed for the door. He hadn't expected an answer but I gave him one... to impress the others. In their eyes, I had to be seen as more or less equal to Michaelson or they would always go over my head when they had something to bitch about...which was inevitable in the field. Of course, in Michaelson's mind, I was a mere slave/student but I had no intention of letting them know that. Archaeology is not without its politics.

I shook my head and packed up my stuff. Cathy followed her father out of the room but as she left, she put her hand on my shoulder and squeezed. I almost laughed out loud. She was doing exactly what I had just done. She was letting the rest of the crew get the impression that she and I shared a special relationship and therefore, she acquired a bit of power for herself. She was one astute cookie. Nice ass too, I thought to myself as she strode from the room. I wasn't in love but lust would amply describe the feelings I had. I would have to work on that 'special' relationship she had implied. What was I doing?? My stomach knotted up again and all thoughts of Catherine Michaelson vacated my brain. My own skin was getting harder and harder to protect.

"Patrick?" I looked up. Peter and Judy were standing there. I'd thought they'd left with the boss.

"We're going for coffee. Want to join us?" Judy looked so pitiful that I couldn't resist. She had some questions and it had taken all her nerve to ask me that one. Perhaps, I'd pushed the power thing a bit too much.

"Why not." I shrugged. I had nothing better to do except worry. The halls were busy as usual and getting to the cafeteria was a bit like riding a subway. I said so and got blank stares back. Shit, I'd forgotten there were no subways in the west. It was going to be a long summer. We found a table and settled in. I relaxed as they began to pick my brain.

"What can we expect down there really? I know you gave us that romantic picture in there but it isn't all that perfect, is it?" Judy asked the inevitable question. It was amazing how all of the projects start the same. You give the crew the lowdown but they don't believe you. They need to be given the information personally and in confidence. That way, they too acquire a bit of power over the others who believed the official version, or so they think. I've done enough field work to know that this is necessary and useful.

"Lots of good and bad. It's very different from here. In the sierra, the folks are friendly most of the time. You sleep well once you get used to the altitude. You eat like a horse and don't gain weight. The scenery is spectacular."

"You said most of the time? What do you mean?"

"They are pretty tolerant people unless they think you have some connection with the government. Then they stonewall you. That happened to us once and it took us weeks before they would even notice us again. As long as you are careful and crack a few jokes about morons in the government, you're in like flint."

"What else can we expect? Animals?"

"Not too many critters live up there but there are a few. Scorpions, little tan buggers that can really sting. If they pump enough venom into you it can be fatal. They're hard to kill too." I smiled, recalling a round I went with one of them ugly suckers. I told them the story.

"One of the lab crew on the last project collected bones and bugs so he asked me to bring him back a scorpion exoskeleton. I agreed but you can't bring the skeleton without bringing the rest of him along. I managed to get a nice specimen into an empty film canister to bring back. Without air, light and food, I figured he'd be dead in no time. We parked him and his film canister on the window sill for two weeks. He had to be dead, right? Not a chance. All he was was mad. When I popped that canister, he came out slashing. Not only was he alive, he was ready to take on the whole lot of us and contrary to popular opinion, they are damn fast. He was dashing all around the table trying to strike at anything that moved or gave off body heat. I finally smashed him with a cooking pot. He died but the skeleton was worth shit. My buddy never did get his scorpion. For a brief moment, I contemplated sending him one through the mail once I got to Carabamba but I decided not to. If they get pissed off sitting on a windowsill, can you imagine how mad he'd be after a two week trip through the mails? Too bad. It would've been fun.

"Also run into packs of wild dogs - loads of fun. You have to bounce a rock off their foreheads just to get their attention. But some of us will be armed and we

should have no trouble with the dogs." I lied. Nothing short of a major explosion would slow down a pack of hungry dogs but I've been lucky so far. I hoped my luck would hold.

"The real trouble may come if we run into the guerillas. Sometimes they are nasty but usually, they are pretty reasonable. The police, the guardia, are far worse. They aren't reasonable at all. They are just stupid and trigger-happy. I've been shot at more than once and never by a guerilla."

"Then why bother going back there...if it's all that dangerous?" Peter spoke for the first time.

"Those things are more a nuisance than a real danger. Thankfully, the guardia they send up to the sierra couldn't hit a cathedral with a tank, despite lots of practice."

"Why did they shoot at you?" Jane asked. She was real jumpy and I could see that I'd better alter the direction of the conversation or she'd go screaming off into the woodwork.

"Just for fun I suppose, but I don't want to give you the wrong impression. Basically, the people down there are good, honest and normal. They even think like we do. Let me give you an example. The first time I went to Carabamba, I was doing a general survey of the prehistoric sites on the plateau. We'd come across an incredibly large pre-Inca site. We were going to spend several days mapping it. Just before dusk on the first day, a group of five local peasants, campesinos, approached. One was carrying a huge metal prybar. Both the director and I automatically assumed the men were huaceros, pot hunters, coming to destroy part of the site looking for treasure, gold mostly. That was a logical conclusion since that country was rife with huaceros. Virtually every prehistoric site has been 'potted' at one time or another. They passed us with polite nods and proceeded to climb to the top of the ruin. My whole crew just stood and watched.

"When they reached the highest terrace, they sat in a rough circle in the shelter of a stone wall, talking quietly. My boss cursed them quietly for their nerve and ordered us back to work. For the next half hour, the campesinos remained where they were. They were very quiet up there. Every fifteen minutes or so, one of the men stood up and hit the wall a few times with the prybar. The second or third time he did that, curiosity got the better of us. The director and I climbed up to their perch.

"With exaggerated politeness, the director spoke to them. Curiosity is considered incredibly rude down there so we went ahead very carefully. He introduced us and explained what we were doing at the site. Finally, we were able to find out what they were doing. I still get a chuckle out of it. It seems these men, like men everywhere, enjoy the occasional night out with the boys...but their wives frown on such goings on. The only way these guys could get away from their women for a quiet, friendly game of cards was to tell the ladies that they were looking for gold in las ruinas. The capper to this story came with the explanation for the iron bar and the wall. The wives gather in the hut just around the next hill and would not believe the men were digging in the ruins unless they hear it. The iron bar hitting the wall sent a resounding clang echoing around the

hills removing any doubt in the wives' minds that their husbands are doing what they said they were doing. Pablo, the eldest of the group, freely admitted having used the same technique for at least twenty years. No, he'd never found any gold but he swore to his wife he would keep searching for it. His wife, he said, was proud of him for his persistence."

"I like them already." Judy sighed. My story had had the desired effect and the two students were back on the positive track.

"I've been there many times and I love it. I'm sure that once you get over the culture shock, you'll feel the same." I didn't want them to get too starry eyed.

"Culture shock?" Peter was interested and I was beginning to respect him. He was quick to pick up on the key.

"Whenever you go to a strange place, your first reaction is always revulsion. You will hate it for about two weeks. After that, it should be fine. I was like that and I've never known anyone to avoid the culture shock. I mention it so that you don't get too down."

"One last thing." Peter hesitated.

"Spit it out." I used as reassuring a tone as I could muster.

"Well, I haven't had much to do with Dr. Michaelson but I thought he was an archival man. Does he have any field experience in Peru?" They both waited for an answer. I struggled for an appropriate answer.

"No, not really. Actually he hasn't done a lot of field work in the past few years. He prefers to work with collections from museums."

"So, he's another one of those arm-chair scientists, isn't he? Sits in his office and commands others to do the dirty work." Judy spoke with surprising vehemence. I imagined she must have run across another of the 'Old Guard' at another university.

"As near as I can figure, the boss hasn't touched a shovel in 15 years. He has always left it up to the graduate students to keep current with field technology. He'd be lost if he had to do some excavating for himself." I stopped, hoping I hadn't gone too far. Judy put her hand on my arm.

"Then, I'm glad that you'll be running things down there. Otherwise it would be a nightmare." Peter nodded agreement. I was relieved. They were starting to feel comfortable with me. I took the momentary lull as a signal to end the conversation.

"Now, I have a lot of work to do and, if you are willing, I could use a hand getting the stuff ready to go."

"Okay." Judy said and Peter agreed. We left the cafeteria and over the next few days, we got the act together and ready for the road.

For me, the field season begins when I climb into the plane and buckle up. At that point, all of the burdens of being a graduate student are lifted off my shoulders. I become a true archaeologist off to find the lost city of the whatever. I love the sensation of freedom that fills me as the plane taxis down the runway and hits the air. It never changes but it is always new. It doesn't matter where the plane is going as long as it is heading for the 'field'. I think a lot of us get this feeling but we don't talk about it. It is our own personal and very private nirvana. It lasts for the duration of the flight which, in this case, was seven hours. The two meals and the two movies, not to mention the German soccer team that was on the way to compete in the South America Cup, did not interfere with my state of mind. All was perfect. Most of the passengers slept. It was a night flight but I wanted to enjoy it all so I didn't sleep. I stared out the window at the crystal sky. Dawn was spectacular from that altitude, all reds, pinks and blues. I was absorbed in it and didn't really hear the announcement that we were on our final approach to the Lima International Airport. I didn't want the flight to end. Once we touched the ground, the reality and hard work of doing research in a foreign country would climb onto my back and I wanted to remain free. But I lost. The plane landed and we, the passengers, strolled off the plane to face the rigors of customs and immigration.

For a moment, I pitied the students who would be arriving in a few days. This first exposure to Peruvian hospitality is never pleasant and it is certainly too complex for the North American mind to contend with. I was almost a native so felt at home with it but they would find it confusing. First, you must stop at the Money Exchange to get your small portion of Peruvian solles...not too much. You need to save some American dollars for the man at Immigration. He deals in black market money and will give you a better deal than the government. You must accept his offer or you will find the customs people going through your luggage as if it contained a nuclear device. I have seen tourists delayed by several hours because they refused to buy black market solles. I purchased the right amount, tipped the immigration official and watched as he gave the customs foreman the sign. My cooperation and my fluent Spanish made this part a breeze. The workers stamped my luggage without even a glance inside and waved me on. I thanked, and tipped them then walked into the morning fog. I smiled.

Lima was just as I had left it. The machine gun totting customs and security people were everywhere, still as corrupt as ever. The air of Lima was thick and heavy as I remembered it. Whoever had chosen the location for Peru's major city had certainly screwed up. One half of Peru's ten million inhabitants live in Lima and the city sits on the only part of the coast where the sun never shines. The city is at the head of a very narrow valley backed by a massive chain of mountains. The clouds roll in off the Pacific and get blocked by the mountains. They sit over Lima turning the whole city grey. I have heard that the sun shines for about five days a year and the government workers get those days off as

holidays. Knowing what I do about the government, I can't believe that. It makes too much sense.

I grabbed a cab and after the required haggling about the price, the driver took me to the Hotel Wilson. I could have stayed at the Hilton on the strip but I like the Wilson. It is a friendly family run hotel on a side street about four blocks from the city center. It is used primarily by Peruvian businessmen and tourists. Gringos rarely stay there but I qualify as a regular.

"Buenos dias, Sr. Hardy. It is good to see you back. Are you here for long?" The desk clerk was the son of the owner and was taking English courses at the University. He always took pride in his English and practiced it on me whenever I stayed there. I liked him.

"No. Unfortunately, I have to head for Trujillo tomorrow." He looked disappointed so I added that I would be back in a couple of weeks and that there would be several students passing through over the next few days. His eyes lit up when I told him that among the students were a few gorgeous gringas that would need a lot of help and attention. He promised to look after them personally and I knew what he meant. I thanked him anyway. I headed for my room and took some time to get organized. I wasn't in any real hurry so I sat and thought for a while.

I spent the rest of the day talking to government officials and museum people making sure our permits and other attendant paperwork were in order. The bureaucrats like those in any government feed on paper. I gave them plenty.

That night, I slept well and rose early. I was anxious to have my traditional first breakfast at Alfredo's - a toasted ham sandwich, some fresh orange and papaya juice and lots of cafe con leche, a truly decadent Peruvian drink. The milk is steamed and has liquid instant coffee added to it. It is thick, rich and delicious. It is made only in the mornings. After lunch, strong black coffee is all you can get and I hate black coffee.

I was in a hurry as I had a few stops to make before reaching Alfredo's, all of them traditional first day activities. Stop one, I whipped into the Post Office to send Genaro a cable informing him of my arrival in Trujillo at sunset. He wouldn't be at the airport to greet me but I wasn't expecting him to be. He would swear up and down and curse the Post Office saying that he never received my telegram. I would accept that lie knowing that had at least given him time to reseal the crates of supplies I'd sent down. It was a game we had played many times. We both played our parts well.

Stop two. Two doors down, I went to the head office at Customs. I spoke to Pedro Jesus Algomedro Barr who, despite his busy schedule, always had time for rich gringos. I explained that today and tomorrow, six students and one professor would be arriving. He was to make sure that the students would pass through customs with a minimum of hassle. A handshake, a list of the students and an American twenty sealed the bargain. I had smoothed their way as much as I could. I silently wished them luck and prayed to St. Christopher that they wouldn't screw up too badly.

Stop three. A tobacco shop on the main drag was next. I picked up a carton of Ducals, a Peruvian cigarette indistinguishable in taste from Canadian

cigarettes. I am always amazed that a backward country like Peru could produce a good smoke while the all-powerful U.S. of A. only manages to make cigarettes that taste like camel shit. Modern technology is not so great after all. I stepped out and headed down the boulevard towards the main square. I was almost ready for breakfast. Only one more quick detour. The State Hotel was as imposing as ever as it overlooked the square from the northeast corner. Four stories of gleaming white stucco and marble window sills. Huge double doors of solid wood carved by artisans dead many centuries. Dating from the 1700's, the hotel, like the people of Peru, had survived revolutions, wars, earthquakes and fire. To me, it represented the strength of the country's inhabitants. I watched it for a few moments before going inside. To the left of the main doors is a newsstand that caters to foreigner and local alike. Ignoring the North American papers, I picked up a Lima daily and tossed twenty soles into the jar. The newsstand you see, is unattended. In a country where every government official is corrupt and many businesses survive on graft alone, there is a little island of honesty, a pile of newspapers and a money jar without a clerk. The hotel bellboy collects the money every once in a while although I have seen the jar full to bursting. Yet, no one steals the money. Peru is a collection of little ironies and paradoxes. I love it.

Paper in hand and duties done, I strolled across the square to Alfredo's, a tiny cafe wedged between the cathedral and a shoeshop. Whenever I am in Lima, I have breakfast there. The food is good, the service friendly and Alfredo doesn't cheat gringos too much. Like the Hotel Wilson, Alfredo's is a family affair and over the years, I have gotten to know the family well. I believe that I am the only gringo ever to visit the home of Alfredo and family. The old man himself is serving this morning. I can't help but smile at his exaggerated style and exuberant friendliness. He looks up as I enter and his face says that his long lost son has come home.

"Patricio! Como esta?..." He yells from across the room. He charges to where I stand and crushes me in a hug.

"Muy bien, papa. Ustedes? I am well. You are still healthy and strong? How are Maria and the boys?" I ask the traditional questions and I do feel a bit like a prodigal son. As per tradition, our tradition, he tells me that I am too thin, demands to know why I haven't married yet, reminds me that by my age, he had fathered four sons, and asks me how long will I be in Lima. I answer the questions, asked some of my own and signalled my greetings to Jesus, the eldest son, who was on cooking detail that morning. God, it was good to be home again. Old man Alfredo could see that I wanted to sit down and eat but he wasn't ready to let me go yet. He grabbed my arm and wheeled me into the kitchen. There were shy hugs and kisses from his two daughters and three grand daughters, hearty handshakes from Jesus and Pablo. Maria, Alfredo's wife, stood off in one corner waiting for the chaos to organize itself.

"You are looking well, Patricocitto. The north has been good to you."

"Thank you mamalinda. You look well too. The south has blessed you and your family. You should be proud." With that, I planted a kiss on her cheek.

"I have missed you all, mama. It is good to be back."

"It is good to have my gringo son home again. I suppose you are here to dig around in those filthy trash heaps again." Maria never asked questions. She made statements. After all, she is the ruler of this clan.

"As always," I laughed, "I leave for Trujillo this afternoon but could not leave Lima without seeing you and your family."

"We are honored", Alfredo piped in only half seriously.

"You know you should have a wife to keep you company and give you children." I caught Maria's eye and she shrugged as if to say here he goes again.

"It just so happens that my youngest daughter, Angela, is old enough to marry and she has always adored you. She would make a good wife for you."

"I am flattered, Alfredo, but it would be unfair for me to drag your beautiful Angel from her home and family to live among las ruinas or in the barbaric north."

"Paah..." Alfredo started but Maria interrupted.

"Papa, leave the boy alone. Patrico comes here to eat, not to find a wife. Let him eat."

We all laughed and Alfredo clapped me on the shoulder. He had no idea how tempted I was to accept his offer, for Angela was indeed a beautiful young woman. For a moment, I seriously considered leaving all of my Canadian life behind to become a restaurateur in Lima. Unfortunately, I had other things happening. Shortly, six green estudiantes would be arriving on Lima's doorstep and I had to make sure they didn't trip over the jamb.

Alfredo escorted me to a table where my breakfast waited for me. Jesus had prepared it while I was chatting with his parents. I nodded my thanks and sat. So much of Peruvian life is ritual and all of this too was ritual. It was comforting in a strange way. I ate as I read the paper. I was relieved to see that the political situation was essentially unchanged. It disturbed me a bit however to see that the guardia was cracking down on the coca plots in the sierra. That could mean trouble for us. The campesinos rely on the coca to keep them alive. They don't sell it but it has become an essential part of their subsistence. They need coca to keep them warm and numb. If the government destroyed it all, the poor people would suffer. They would also be very suspicious of strangers and we needed their cooperation. I hoped the guardia hadn't stirred it up too much in Carabamba. I would know soon enough one way or the other.

Over my second and third cups of café con leche, I reviewed my plans for the next few days. Today, I would fly north to Trujillo and meet Genaro. Together, we were to ready two vehicles, one purchased by the project, the other on loan from the Royal Ontario Museum. All of the supplies would be loaded and food stuffs purchased at the market. I also had some more bureaucratic crap to contend with but in Peru, that goes without saying. In the meantime, Michaelson and the SFU group were to arrive in Lima tonight, stay over at the Hotel Wilson awaiting the arrival of the others. The others...there were three other students coming and I knew practically nothing about them. Two from UCLA, John Hamelin and Susan Hayworth, came highly recommended. Both wanted to gather data for M.A.'s and I was sure they could be accommodated. They were arriving tomorrow to meet with Michaelson before going on to Trujillo. The third, Steve Otteron, a Ph.D. candidate from Cornell was coming just for the money.

He had also been highly regarded but I had a funny feeling about him. My gut instincts about people are usually right and that worried me a bit. He was going to be delayed by a few days and would meet us all up north. I had no problem with that. He'd been to Peru before and spoke excellent Spanish. He could handle himself.

Staring at the list of names in front of me, I realized that we had, counting myself, four males and three females. That could be dicey. If paired relationships formed, one man would be left out. I decided that that had better be me if the project staff was to work as a team. What a bummer. Odd man out again. On the other hand, assuming that all seven were straight, there were a possible twelve male-female pairings. If the group was liberal and relaxed, that could result in a lot of bed-hopping... rather sleeping bag hopping. I was glad that I had insisted on medical exams for everyone. At least, I knew we were all clean. Naturally, I could not control for the difficulties arising if one or more of the crew took a shine to local stuff. What a job! Life is never simple for a project leader. Maybe I should stay here with beautiful little Angela and papa Alfredo. I glanced at my watch and decided to get rolling. I only had four hours before my flight and much to do. I promised to come back soon and have dinner with the family. I was told Angela was a fabulous cook. I ignored the hint with regret.

Back in the street, I gathered my scattered thoughts and ran down the list of stuff that had to be done in Lima. I knew I couldn't get all of it done this time but since I was scheduled to be back in Lima in a couple of weeks, I selected out one or two things that were absolutely essential. Off I went to tackle the massive Peruvian bureaucracy. I was in my glory.