

The mid-afternoon flight to Trujillo was relatively uneventful, a rare phenomenon considering one had to fly AeroPeru...affectionally referred to as Pteradactyl Airlines. The planes are ancient, the stewardesses fat and the pilots crazy. Usually, a triple loop roller coaster is dull compared to a ride on AeroPeru. This time, we were only 2 1/2 hours late taking off and the pilot managed to find the runway on the first try. I was impressed and relieved. Only a crazy man or a Peruvian would look forward to flying with the cowboys of the sky. I kept myself busy during the flight by reviewing the geography of Peru.

Picture a series of narrow strips laid side by side parallel to the coast. No strip is very wide but each is distinct. The coastal strip is a desert of the scariest kind. It is a cold desert that makes Death Valley look like a jungle. In warm deserts, there are all kinds of cacti and other plants. Not so the Peruvian desert. It is all rocks and sand and nothing else. The most disturbing part of being in that part of the country is the silence, no birds, no bugs, no animal sounds at all...just the wind which is supposed to drive a man crazy in four or five hours. I've never been able to stay in that desert long enough to find out if that's true. Thankfully, the coastal desert strip is only about ten to twelve miles wide in the north. Hard against the sand is the first set of mountains, rising up 7,000 feet. To attest to the power of the desert and the wind, there are huge sand dunes on top of these mountains. Between the mountains, the rise is more gradual and the environmental changes more readily visible. After you leave the coast heading inland, you pass through huge sugar cane plantations. Tall green stalks seven to ten feet high stretch for miles. That's the second strip...incredibly fertile agricultural land. Further inland yet and a few hundred feet up, the plantations give way to tropical plants of wild and exotic variety. Orchids dot the avocado and mango trees. Forests of dense green and red foliage cover every available patch of ground.

As you climb higher, the vegetation thins and changes to semi-tropical, then mountain slope growth, in a slow but steady progression. Before you realize it, you have reached 13,000 feet above sea level and you are standing in pastures of short scrub grass and stunted bushes. This is the high sierra jalca, my first love. I've lived for many months over many years on the jalca and I am truly at home there. The climate is predictable and comfortable all the time. Cool days and cold nights continue without end. To the east are two more climatic strips but I have little interest in them. The high sierra with its bare rock and lichen can be seen from the jalca, but I've never been there. Beyond that are the eastern slopes of the Andes that drop abruptly into the Amazon Basin. Every time I think about it, I am amazed. God made all of this and packed it into a country barely 200 miles wide. There is something about Peru that turns a die-hard atheist like me into a religious zealot. Come to think about it, it also makes a radical nonconformist into a ritualist as well. All just part of the paradox that is Peru.

The daydreaming and the flight ended. I climbed down the ramp out onto the tarmac. I took a deep breath and nodded. The pig farm still dominated the

airwaves. It is said that you can locate Trujillo and head straight for it from anywhere in the north. You just sniff the wind and head for the pig farm. Trujillo is right next door...ya can't miss it.

Trujillo, the rose of the north, second largest city in Peru, has about a million and a half inhabitants. Many are government workers or military types but a lot are businessmen and their families. Compared to the folks who live a few miles away in the country, the people of Trujillo are well off, almost rich. The average bureaucrat salary is equal to \$50.00 American per month. The campesinos work for \$3.00 or \$4.00 per month when there are jobs available. They are rare. I do not like Trujillo or its residents much. Many are mean, small-minded people with greed and ambition as prime motivators. It is said that bureaucrats who want to rise to the upper levels of government must do a tour of duty here before returning to Lima. Those that fail to make it, remain here. It is a bitter city but it serves as a source of goods and supplies unattainable in the sierra. It is a necessary evil. However, in the right company, the city can be fun...especially at night.

I have managed to find a few good people here, people who don't stare at the white skinned gringos as if they were lepers. The clerk at the Hotel Chan Chan was one such person. I recall my first exposure to Trujillo. I was in culture shock and alone. I needed to get to the Post Office but had no idea where it was. My Spanish was bad but I explained to her as best I could what I wanted. She listened patiently and I liked her for that alone. Once she figured out what I wanted to do, she took over. She marched me outside to the curb. There she flagged down a city bus and loaded me aboard. She rattled something to the driver who nodded and took off. She waved as I stared back at her. The driver kept an eye on me until we got to the main square. There he stopped his bus, took me by the arm and walked me out and around his vehicle. He pointed down a side street and held up three fingers muttering 'mas aya'. I said 'gracias' and set off in the direction he had indicated. Sure enough, three blocks down that street was the Post Office. I bought my stamps and envelopes. Then I realized I had no idea how to get back. I sighed and retraced my steps to the square. There, to my amazement, was the bus, the driver and a busload of passengers, waiting patiently for me. I climbed aboard to a sea of smiles that I returned. In no time, I was back at the Hotel, grateful for the help from the clerk, the driver, and others. That afternoon, I bought her a bunch of flowers and we have been fast friends ever since. She no longer works at the hotel but we still exchange cards at Christmas.

That experience taught me a valuable lesson and I have worked hard in the intervening years on my Spanish. Now, I can speak the language of Peru well and that alone has made me many friends here. Of course, I am also seen as a bit of an oddity. Here is a white skinned, blue-eyed gringo who talks like a middle class farmer type native. My accent is definitely north Peru and that has thrown people on occasion. They expect my Spanish to be Liman or classic, but that is irrelevant right now.

Since no international flights land at the Trujillo airport, there is no customs office and no hassle...just like getting off a bus. Cabs galore await the

passengers and I have no trouble getting one to go to the Hotel Chan Chan. Chan Chan, by the way, is the name of a huge prehistoric city that lies in ruins west of the city...underneath the pig farm actually. The hotel took its name from the site. Many theses have been written about the site but none yet on the hotel, although it deserves study. Some very strange people pass through those hotel doors, not the least of which are periodic gaggles of foreign archaeologists.

"Buenas dias, senora," I intoned as I approached the reception desk tucked under the stairs. The lobby is tiny being just a landing at the bottom of the main stairs. The clerk is unknown to me but no matter. They are expecting me. My room is ready and the hot water has been turned on...a kindness I expressed my gratitude for. I hate taking cold showers although they have been necessary at times.

There are no bellboys at the hotel so I carry the bags myself. They've given me a room on the first floor overlooking the street. I am pleased. It is a great pleasure for me to awaken to the early sounds of the streets coming to life. The room is nothing. A dresser and a sagging double bed plus a single wooden chair make up the furnishings of the square box. In one corner is the washroom and it is a reminder that we aren't in a civilized part of the world. It contains the sink and the toilet but it also has a sign on the wall warning of dire consequences should one inadvertently put toilet paper into the toilet. The ancient plumbing of the city can't handle it. After use, the toilet paper must be put into the trashcan provided for that purpose. To the uninitiated, this can be a gross-out but it is an inconvenience one soon gets used to.

Actually, the hotel layout is designed to eliminate the smells from the washrooms in a unique way. All the bathrooms have windows that open onto a central airshaft. The tall chimney-like column creates a strong updraft that pulls the air up and out of the offending rooms. A marvelous piece of ingenuity. The only drawback to the design is that all of the bathrooms are interconnected and it is possible to hear everything that goes on in every bathroom in the hotel from any of the rooms. There is therefore not a hell of a lot of privacy in the Hotel Chan Chan.

I had avoided telling the crew about this bit of Peruvian business mostly because North Americans have a thing about privacy particularly when it comes to the use of the bathroom. More than one potential Andean archaeologist has copped out because of the bathroom facilities in Peru. Hell, this was luxury considering some of the even more primitive facilities we would encounter in the sierra. I didn't mind.

A woman's voice roused me from a sound sleep.

"Senor. Senor! There is a cable for you. Senor?"

"Si! Gracias, senora. Momentito, por favor." I threw on my pants and unlocked the door. I accepted the envelope and looked at it. I tore it open and read its contents.

"Aw shit. No!" I knew things had been going too well. The cable meant trouble although the message seemed innocuous enough. Ungarbled (cable operators love garble), it read:

"TO PATRICK HARDY, HOTEL CHANCHAN / HAVE RENTED A CAR / WILL DRIVE TO TRUJILLO / NOT FLY / HAVE FIVE STUDENTS IN TOW / SEE YOU THURSDAY / MICHAELSON."

It was dated Monday. Today was Wednesday and we were in trouble. No one takes a six-hour car ride through the coastal desert in a rental car except stupid gringos. I can see Michaelson coming up with the damn idea: "Hey guys, how about we see a bit of the country before getting down to work? We'll drive up, spend the night in some quaint little village. It'll be great!" No one would have the balls to disagree with him so they'd do it...in a RENTAL car. God, why me? Why me?! Doesn't everyone know rental cars are duds in this country? I should have waited in Lima for the morons. Damn!!

Okay, calm down. In North America, rentals are clean, comfortable and usually late model. In Peru, the rental companies use only lemons, the wrecks that wouldn't be missed if they were stolen. You see, it is a national sport to go rent a car and then forget to bring it back. Car theft is illegal. Rental car theft is fun. In turn, that means that all cars rented in this country are not built or maintained to handle heavy driving with a full load for any great distance. They, Michaelson and company, were trying to do just that through the deadest desert in the world. Damn them to hell.

Maybe, just maybe, they'll make it. Perhaps, I should wait until mañana to panic. They'll be okay. Won't they? They could take it easy, crawl along, get gas a couple of times and be here tomorrow as scheduled. Gas? Gas?! Oh no. They wouldn't know a Peruvian gas station if one bit them. There ain't no Shell stations on that highway. Michaelson had been to Peru before but always on first class projects with hired guides/interpreters and the like. He'd be as useless as the students out there. No, I can't wait until tomorrow to panic! I'd better do it now!

I dressed quickly, packed some essentials and headed for my jeep, the loaner from ROM. I'd left Genaro the one he'd bought for us. It was only fitting that he get stuck with the heap we'd paid an inflated price for. I navigated the chaos they call traffic and stopped in the middle of the street outside Genaro's house. That was safer than trying to park it. Honking the horn, I yelled:

"Genaro, get your ass out here! We got trouble."

"What trouble, amigo?" came from the garage. "Is the guardia chasing you again?" Genaro added as he ambled down the driveway. I quickly told him about the telegram and he sprang into action. He ran into the garage and came out again shouldering a pack and carrying a toolbox.

"Hit it!" He said as he climbed aboard and I did just that.

"I've always wanted to say that." Genaro laughed. In no time, we were on the Pan Am highway heading south towards Lima. I crossed my fingers and prayed that none of the horrors that sprang to mind occurred to the occupants of the rental car. I also cursed them and fervently hoped all of the nightmares would come true for them. As we drove, we discussed our plan of action. In every small town, there is a guardia post. The guardia usually are aware of the traffic that passes through their respective hamlets. Six gringos would certainly make them sit up and take notice. All we had to do was stop at each police station and inquire. When we hit one that had seen our quarry, we'd know roughly where to look. It seemed sound despite both my and Genaro's aversion of the guardia. This trip was not going to be fun.

The guardia of the Viru Valley towns hadn't seen the rental car but promised to stop and detain the students if they got past us. The promise of a special reward was the right motivator. Slowly, we worked our way south, stopping at every jerkwater hamlet on the highway. By evening, we were about halfway to Lima. No sign of them yet. Genaro and I were close to exhaustion when we reached the town of Huarmay. By mutual consent, this would be an overnight stop. The local pension was suitably clean so we checked in.

"Sleep or eat, Patrico? I don't care either way." Genaro mumbled as we kicked off our workboots.

"Let's clean up and eat. I'm so hungry, I could eat an entire chancho."

"Bien. Sounds good to me." He paused, "Do you think we will find them tomorrow?"

"Yeah. We'll find 'em. Remember, they are stupid gringos fresh from the north. They are not prepared to deal with the oddities of your country. Right now, they are probably camped out on the shoulder of the road waiting for an AMA tow truck." We both laughed but neither of us quite believed my prediction. We washed the desert sand off as best we could. A glance out the window told us where to satisfy our most immediate need - food. All small towns in this part of the world are built around a town square. That square, or plaza, invariably contains a park, a church, and at least one restaurant. The time was near 9:00 p.m. and a lot of people were out and about. All were heading in one direction...towards the square, if my estimation was correct. We followed the crowds and, lo and behold, were lead directly to the Plaza Central. This one had all of the normal attributes of a plaza plus an extra bonus. The police station, in most towns, is usually on or near the highway. Here, it occupied the northwest corner of the plaza. One greasy constable sat on the porch, automatic rifle on his lap. He was asleep. So, what else was new. We entered the first cafe we saw and sat down.

I swear all Peruvian restaurants share the same decorator. If it weren't for the sign over the police station, visible through the open door of the cafe, we

couldn't know for sure we were in Huarmey. We could have be sitting in Chimbote, Viru, Salpo, or any other town for that matter. There were six tables in this eating place. They were chrome legged and formica topped. Red polka dot oil cloth covered each one. Four chrome and nogahyde chairs encircled each table. The walls were adorned with odd calendars and the large brass crucifix hung over the door. There were no other customers in the cafe but that didn't mean faster service. Things happen in Peru when they happen. They cannot be hurried. I smoked two Ducals and had time to gossip with Genaro about mutual acquaintances at the Universidad de Trujillo before a shy young lady, I guessed a twelve year old, approached us. She spoke to Genaro who ordered us beer and the 'house special' dinner. We were delighted, at least I was, to have steaming plates of pork saltado and rice put in front of us. Her job done, the little nina exited stage right, back into the kitchen. If this was a typical cafe, we would not see her again until we rose to leave or if we shouted for service. Peruvians enjoy their privacy and also tend to respect the privacy of others.

Genaro was in the middle of a rather ribald tale of one of his compatriot's exploits when a shadow crossed our table. I glanced up to see a big man, over 6'2", with a full beard covering all but his big brown eyes. They were cold and penetrating. He did not meet my gaze however. Instead, he turned and sat at the next table, his back to us. Genaro silently mouthed the word 'guardia' and held three fingers against his left shoulder. I nodded. The local Chief of Police had come down to check out the strangers in his town. I examined him more closely as the waitress brought him beer. The muscles on his back and arms stood out against his checked shirt. He kept himself in good shape considering he was the guardia and in his mid-forties. He could be a formidable opponent in a brawl and I'd lay money on him having been in more than a few.

"Why does an intelligent man like you associate with an ugly gringo?" He said in a deep voice. Before Genaro could answer the comment that was obviously directed at him, I signalled him to stay quiet. I answered in his stead:

"Because he is rich and I am poor. I hope to lure him into the desert at night and murder him for his money." My sense of humor is somewhat left of center and I couldn't resist. The Chief sputtered in his beer and turned to face us. He looked angry. I continued (I have never been very good at knowing when to quit).

"Of course, if he won't come out to the desert, I will have to strangle him when he falls asleep." I watched the Chief's face as the anger dissolved to be replaced by a huge smile. I grinned and invited him to join us at our table. Grabbing the neck of his beer bottle with his left hand, he strode over, his right hand extended in front of him. I rose and grasped his offered hand in both of mine.

"Buenas noches, gringo. You have made a fool of me and I deserved it. Please forgive my rudeness. We seldom see gringos here and they are all pushy Americanos. It's no excuse but I had not expected a gringo to speak campesino Spanish."

"Sit down Chief. Have another beer. It is not often I meet a policeman with a sense of humor." He flinched and laughed.

"I like you, gringo. You are foolish enough to speak out when wise men would remain silent. What brings you to our humble village?"

"Patrico is an archaeologist...He was waiting for his crew to arrive from Lima. At the last minute, they decided to drive instead of fly." Genaro's tongue had become unstuck. He has never been comfortable with my sense of humor. He was beginning to loosen up now that he was sure we weren't going to spend the night in the jail. The Chief took a minute to digest Genaro's information. He was quick, I'll give him that. It was a joy to watch his face. It reflected every thought and emotion that passed through him. I remember thinking I'd love to play poker with this man. I would win a fortune.

"Let me guess, my friends. These crewmen are all gringos... anxious to see our beautiful country but they have little between their ears? They are ignorant of the ways of the Peruano? Am I right?" I nodded.

"They rented a car in Lima and now I have to scour the countryside looking for their gringo butts." I went on to explain what Genaro and I had been up to. My anger fed my tongue and I'm afraid that I was a bit long winded. I stopped abruptly when I noticed the Chief and Genaro exchange glances.

"It is my turn to apologize. I should have shut up long ago."

"That appears to be a major problem of yours, Patrico. You look like a gringo - light hair, white skin, blue eyes. Yet you talk like a peasant from the province of La Libertad. That I can understand." He picked up the pace of his speech when he saw that I was about to interrupt.

"What I can't figure is your thinking. You are organized and efficient in a way no Peruvian can be. God help us we are not an efficient people. We thrive in chaos. So you are North American yet you have a feeling for Peru. You fit right in despite the fact that you are ugly. Just now, you cursed those gringo students and the professor as if you were one of us and not a gringo yourself. So you are South American." He shrugged.

"In a way, I pity you, gringocitto. You have one foot in the north and another in the south. If you are not careful, you will be torn in two." He put his hand on my forearm. "I do not say this lightly. I want you to know. I have just met you but you have a friend in Huarmey. Should you have need of a police chief in a small town, you send me a message. Sign it gringo and I will come. I think that someday, you will need all the help you can get."

I was humbled. The Chief had cut to the core of a dilemma I'd been wrestling with for years. His understanding warmed me and I looked into his eyes with respect.

"Gracias, amigo. Perhaps one day I shall have need of your aid. Maybe too, a humble gringo can help a police chief with something. But that is all in the future. Right now, I have to find six people lost in the desert before the highway pirates or the guardia get to them. Without those people, my project is screwed."

"You forget that I am the guardia. My cousin is the Prefecto in Pativilca, a town some 75 kilometers south of here. I will contact him and see if your friends have made it that far. For now, there is no more you can do tonight. Sleep. You look tired."

I agreed and we parted. I was asleep before my head hit the pillow. I slept well as I always do when I am down south.

8

I rose early and roused Genaro. He'd sleep till noon given the chance but I was in a hurry. We had to check in with our new friend then head south. I also needed coffee in the worst way. We were packed and ready to go when I heard a familiar voice.

"Hey gringo!" I looked out the window to see the Chief, in full uniform, one foot planted on the fender of his car in a classic Clint Eastwood pose. He was impressive and he knew it. He bellowed again:

"Amigo, get out here. I have some news."

"Be right there, Capitan." Together, we walked to the cafe as he filled us in.

"I talked to my cousin in Pativilca. He told me a group matching the description of your friends passed through there yesterday early. They were quite rude to the market people and so are well remembered. They haven't yet made it this far so we can assume the car died between here and there."

"Good. Let's go." I stood up, anxious to get things back under control. The Chief's big hand on my shoulder pushed me back into the chair.

"Relax. Relax. I sent a pair of squad cars out early to look for them. They will locate your friends and bring them here. Have breakfast, take a walk around my town. Take it easy. I will soon have your people back to you."

I thanked him for his kindness and ordered some food. It wasn't Alfredo's but it was good none the less. I considered taking the suggested walk but rejected it. I had a much better way to spend my time. I had to see the Chief again. He listened while I explained my idea. He was receptive and agreed to do what I asked. He spoke briefly to his squad cars by radio and we were set. We waited for results. We talked of families, life, ritual and tradition. I enjoyed his company and his coffee. In what seemed a very short time, his people radioed in. My crew had been located about twenty miles out of town. The guardia were bringing them in. Now it was time for me to take that walk. I got Genaro out of bed again, moved the vehicle onto a side street near the square and walked back to the cafe. My second breakfast was just being served when the squad cars pulled up.

From those cars emerged the sorriest looking lot of gringos I had ever seen. They were dressed in a variety of fashions but all were uniformly filthy. The constables escorted my people into the police station and they were none too gentle about it. The gringos didn't resist very much. They were beaten down for the moment. A night or two on the desert will do that to you. I smiled and tried to imagine what was going on over there as I enjoyed my meal. The cook here was excellent. If Michaelson and company had expected a warm welcome by the rescuing police, they were sadly mistaken. If all went according to plan, my plan,

the Chief would rant and rave a bit before throwing the whole lot into jail. I had earlier inspected the cells and found the accommodations suitably primitive and filthy. Peru does not waste its tax dollars on criminals. I chuckled. Revenge is sweet and I was determined to make the most of it.

Genaro and I did spend a very pleasant morning in the market. I found a hat I liked and he bought a new pair of boots. He finished the story that had been interrupted the night before. We laughed. We worked too. I told him what I wanted to accomplish over the next few weeks and we developed a set of crew assignments, requirements, and drew up lists of supplies. Genaro can be very efficient if cornered. When siesta time rolled around, I joined in. Only in Peru do I enjoy an afternoon nap. Just prior to supper time, I ambled over to the Police Station.

"Buenas noches, Chief. How are our guests doing?"

"As expected. They whined and snivelled for a while but soon gave up. I do not understand much English and their Spanish is appalling. They know that they are in big trouble. One of them, the old man, your professor, even tried to bribe me. Naturally, since I am an honest man, I turned him down. Is he always so cheap? They are not happy. Are you ready to do your duty and rescue your poor persecuted compatriots?"

"No. But I suppose I must." We both laughed and he gestured toward the door that led to the cells. I put my hand on his shoulder and asked for luck. I would need all I could get if I wanted to get through this with a straight face. I stepped into the dimly lit chamber and waited. As my eyes adjusted to the gloom, I saw them. There they were...my crew...huddled together on two iron cots in the holding cell. How pitiful they looked. I waited. Finally, Michaelson looked up and recognized me. With a squeal, he rose and dashed to the bars. He was closely followed by all of the others including those who had no idea who in hell I was.

"Patrick! Thank God! It is so good to see you." Michaelson looked ready to cry. Others, judging from their faces, had been crying already. I suppose being dragged off to jail after a night in the open will wear anybody down.

"Can you get us out of here?"

"Probably but it's going to take some time, Paul. You are in deep shit as far as I can determine.."

"What...what have we done?" Catherine put in. All of them were suffering nicely.

"I just spoke to the head honcho and they have a variety of charges to choose from. He mentioned car theft, trespassing, unlawful use of something or other. That part was unclear. Oh, and he suspects you might be trying to smuggle drugs. He seems determined to keep you here until he has a chance to search the car and the luggage for cocaine." I shrugged and waited for a reaction.

"This is outrageous! We are archaeologists, not dope dealers. Get us out of here." Paul had adopted his God-Head attitude and I resented it.

"Look Paul, we are in Peru, not Canada. There is no such thing as a Charter of Human Rights here. The cops can hold you as long as they like. If I

went out there demanding your release, he's liable to throw me in there with you. Is that what you want?"

"No! God no! Of course not. I know that you will do your best and if anyone can get us out of this ... We are in your hands." I liked hearing Michaelson apologize. I noted that the students were all looking at me with respect and I smiled. But it was a sad smile.

"Okay. Just relax. I will do what I can. Perhaps by morning..." I let it hang. I wanted them to seriously consider the possibility of a night in jail. They sagged in unison as it sunk in. They weren't prepared for that ordeal. For a second, I felt sorry for them. Was I being too hard on them? Shit, no. They had brought this upon themselves. They had committed the crime of stupidity and deserved to do time for it. I promised again to do my best and left. They didn't see the grin on my face. The Chief acknowledged my return with information.

"The car has arrived. My uncle towed it behind his tractor. The problem is minor and Genaro said to tell you it will be running again in a matter of moments. Had any of your crew been even slightly mechanically inclined, they would have reached Trujillo long ago."

"Come on, Chief. I'll buy you dinner. I'm starved." Genaro joined us minutes later and the three of us enjoyed steak and fries, Peruano-style. We talked philosophy and shared beer before getting to the matter at hand. The day was about done and it was time to release the prisoners. I waited outside with the vehicles as the Chief and two constables went inside to roust them out. While I waited, I practised my Clint Eastwood pose. It wasn't nearly as good as the Chief's and Genaro said so. We laughed and were laughing as the gringos tumbled out into the dusky plaza. They spotted me standing there and I was an instant hero. Michaelson shook my hand in gratitude and muttered his thanks. All the others thanked me in turn. Cathy Michaelson was last and instead of shaking my hand, she threw her arms around me and planted a huge kiss. Still embracing, she whispered:

"Thank you for getting us out of there. I want you to know you are terrific." She kissed me again. I released her and raised my voice:

"We have arranged for rooms at the local inn...with showers. Your luggage is there now. The restaurant is preparing a special meal for all of you. We have repaired your car so the sooner you all get in, the quicker you can get cleaned up and fed. Tomorrow, we have a hard drive to Trujillo." Cheers accompanied the scramble into the vehicles. I turned and winked to the Chief who stood on the porch looking very Eastwood like. I was envious. He saluted smartly and I climbed into the jeep. It was a bit crowded but I didn't mind. Cathy's thigh was firmly pressed against mine and her left breast was getting acquainted with my arm pit.....

The group, Genaro included, retired early. I wasn't ready for sleep so I went for a walk.

"Patrick! Wait up." I turned to see Cathy coming through the front door. "Can I walk with you for a bit?" She asked hesitantly.

"Sure." We walked west, towards the ocean.

"How did you manage to get us out of that mess? I figured we were royally screwed."

"You have to know these people, Cathy. The police were offended by your inability to speak the language of the country, by your arrogant assumption that they exist to serve you. Here, you have to earn the right to be helped. Your dad pissed them off by demanding. So they reacted." I was not a complete liar. All of the above was true if you counted me on the side of the Peruanos.

"I talked to the Chief of Police and convinced him that although you - all six of you - were stupid and ignorant, you meant no harm. He agreed to release you all providing I took personal responsibility for your behavior while you are in Huarmey. By the way, that's the name of this hamlet. I also promised on my mother's grave that you will never set foot in his district again. A small price to pay for your freedom, don't you think?"

"Whatever you did, you are a miracle worker." She stopped me and planted a kiss on my cheek.

"What was that for?"

"I've only met you a few times but I like you, Patrick. You keep doing things that surprise me."

"I surprise you? How?" I wanted to avoid the overtones I thought I'd heard in the conversation for now. The situation wasn't altogether comfortable, particularly considering that I had spotted the Chief following us. If we hadn't stopped, I wouldn't have even thought of a tail.

"Simple. Take today for example. In the cell, we talked about you...How to convince the cops to let us contact you. We figured it would take two or three days before you could get here and get us out. We'd barely finished that conversation and there you were, standing in the doorway. It was a miracle. You have made quite an impression on the crew, you know." I raised an eyebrow. "Yeah. They were talking about it before they went to sleep. You are a God in their eyes...a white knight...How in the hell did you know where to look for us?"

I explained the procedure Genaro and I had used beginning with the arrival of the telegram. She listened with interest and I watched her face. (face watching is a favorite pass time of mine). Her features softened as I told her about the way of life and the thinking that was Peru. I elaborated a little because of her reactions. I got the feeling that, with time, she too could learn to love this place. I began to see her as a person rather than an appendage of her father, my professor. I did all of the talking but I liked her more and more. I told her a lot of things about Peru and its people. I was a bit preoccupied though. We were still being followed.

The street ended and the beach began. The sound of the surf was calming. I took off my shoes and let the sand fill the spaces between my toes. Cathy turned her jeans up and slipped her shoes off too. It was a clear night and the stars were bright.

"Come on. I want to show you something." I said on impulse and grabbed her hand. We walked to the edge of the water. I turned south. "Look straight along the shoreline to just above the horizon. What do you see?"

Cathy looked for a minute and then smiled: "Those stars... they form a cross, right?"

"Correct, Senorita." The Chief had come up behind us and spoke in fairly good English. Both of us jumped. I had forgotten he was there.

"You were following us, Chief," I replied, also in English. You never told me you spoke English."

"There was no need, Patrico. Your Spanish was so good and I think you are at home more with Spanish than English."

Cathy was looking at us somewhat suspiciously so I put my brain into gear. I had to settle two questions quickly. First, I had to know that Cathy did not suspect duplicity in today's events and second, I had to find out what the Chief wanted.

"That group of stars sitting above the South Pole is called the Southern Cross and it guides many travellers to their destinations. It cannot steer you wrong, so, young lady, when you are in doubt, look to the Southern Cross for help." The Chief finished his speech and turned to me.

"Yes, my friend, I followed you. I had hoped to find you alone. When the gringalinda went with you, I was hesitant. I watched her as you spoke of Peru and, as you do I think, I believe that soon she will cease to be a gringa and become a true citizen of Peru." I nodded and as Cathy watched us, somewhat bewildered, he continued. He still spoke English, obviously so she could follow what he said.

"Tomorrow, you return to Trujillo. I did not want you to leave without a gift from the guardia of Huarmey." He handed me a small boat made of reeds. It was a symbol of the livelihood of the people of Huarmey and of friendship. I accepted it and felt sad.

"Patrico, you have a bunch of fools working for you but I hope they know how fortunate they are to work for a man such as you. If they work hard, it is just possible they will learn something of my country. Come back and visit sometime, both of you. Now it is time to go. Via con dios, friend. May God grant you a way to live in both worlds." We solemnly shook hands and he was gone. I whispered: "Go with God, amigo. My heart stays with you."

With a laugh, Cathy broke the spell.

"Didn't I say you always surprise me. That man, the Chief of Police, was the enemy this morning and leaves this evening as if he were your best friend. Will I ever understand you?"

"Maybe...if you learn to understand the Peruvians. I hope so." I looked up at the sky. It felt right under the Southern Cross. The Chief was right. Let the Cross guide you onto the right path. I promised him that I would follow his excellent advice. Slowly, we walked back to the inn. To her unspoken invitation, I shook my head. The timing was wrong. I am a romantic and would have fallen into her bed gladly but I am also a realist. For the next little while, we both had jobs to do. Until we got settled at the site, there would be no time for emotional involvement. We needed to be able to concentrate on work. I settled for a goodnight kiss and we parted.

I was up to my ass in work. I travelled from Trujillo to the Carabamba Plateau twice ferrying supplies while the student crew kept busy drawing maps from air photos. That exercise would save us valuable time when we actually got to work on the sites. I also had to go to Lima to straighten out some problems with the permits. Much of the time however, I spent getting to know all of the students. I watched and listened to them trying to determine how each of them thought. Once I had them figured, I could put myself in their place. That has advantages to it, if you know what I mean. The new kids were of special interest as I had not met them prior to the Huarmey event.

John Hamelin was a rather short but good looking young man. He is shy and withdrawn but has a quick mind. He was enthusiastic about the project. I liked him because of his attitude. No job was too dirty for him if the results would be good data. A definite asset to the team. I decided to give him a lot of room to explore his own ideas.

Susan Hayworth I disliked as much as I liked John. She gave me the impression she was a California bimbo with a lot of great body. I felt her elevator didn't quite reach the top floor if you know what I mean. I wouldn't call her dumb but...oh hell, she was dumb. My estimation of UCLA went down several pegs given that this young lady was in their Master's program. I expect that she slept with some or all of the committee that approved new students. On the good side, she was beautiful. A sunshine blonde with legs that went for miles. All of her clothes were tailored to best exhibit her charms. I figured she'd be good for decoration and little else. Maybe I could use her to put numbers on artifacts.

Steve Otteron, the Cornell Ph. D. student, arrived as per his schedule. I was not prepared for this fastidious dandy. I had assumed that since he had been to Peru before, he had at least one foot on the ground. Of medium height and build, he gave the impression that he was superior to all around him. It was like he was rehearsing to take on a professorship. He was a young Michaelson and he was going to be trouble. On a more positive note (I always like to find something positive about everyone), his Spanish was beautiful and charming. He was a lady-killer in the best Latino sense. I immediately put him to work hiring a local team. We needed a Peruvian field boss and a cook for our base camp in Otuzco. He did an admirable job.

Michaelson decided to take a few days to fly to Lima and check out the archives there. I encouraged him as I had spent a lot of my time solving problems he had created. Almost as soon as he left, I called all of the staff together. I wanted to establish a firm power base and fill them in on the two apparently contradictory aims of the project - Michaelson's and mine. I also wanted to establish a tradition of open and free discussions at regular intervals. I hoped that differences of opinion would be brought out and dealt with rather than allowed to fester.

We gathered in a spare room in the hotel. I was anxious to emphasize the neutrality of these meetings. I was the last to arrive and as I scanned the room, I

was not pleased by the arrangement of bodies. The SFU group was on one side and the other students were on the other. Off in one corner sat Genaro with the two Peruvian employees. That made sense as Genaro was to serve as interpreter. I had to speak English for the majority. The other groups unfortunately reflected the possibility of cliques forming. I would have to put an immediate stop to that.

"Welcome, people. I realize that we have been together for about ten days now but we haven't really had an opportunity to get acquainted. I apologize for the delay but we had a lot to do before the project got underway officially. I am happy to announce the end of the preparatory stage. In two days, we move up to our first base camp in Otuzco. Once there, we will be doing archaeology. Genaro and I have spent some time working out the job assignments for Otuzco and the sites. I believe that we have come up with an arrangement that will suit everyone's needs and interests." That was an out and out lie. I was about to make up the job roster but if they figured that out, my control of the group would dissolve immediately.

"Okay. We will be working on two main sites and completing a survey of the Carabamba Plateau simultaneously. I will oversee all aspects of the project through you. Here are your duties: John, I want you to handle the excavation of Cerro Sulcha, the pre-Inca city. It's a complex site. I have the maps here. Take a look at them and see if you can come up with a research design that will maximize data recovery. Have you read my initial report on that site?"

"As soon as I got word I was coming along. I have some ideas but I need to know how many men I will have."

"I can let you have five locals...and possibly another student. Before I go any further, do I have a volunteer?" I like to give the impression of democracy at these meetings.

Judy spoke up: "Patrick, I've heard you speak on that site. I have to admit that your enthusiasm is what started me thinking about applying for the project. Yes, I'd like to volunteer. I want to work with John at Cerro Sulcha."

"Good. You're on." I would have assigned it to Judy if she hadn't volunteered. It was working out nicely.

"Excuse me," Steve leaned forward, "I know that Cerro means hill but what does Sulcha mean?" There is always one in every crowd. He knew damn well that no one knew what that word meant. He was out to establish my ignorance and therefore his dominance.

"Cerro Sulcha was named for the nearest geographical feature as are all sites in Peru. The word sulcha has no real meaning I know of. It was probably a family name. The archival records show the name Sulcha for several residents of the town of Salpo at the north end of the Plateau." The crew was satisfied with that explanation and Steve was stymied. His face was slightly flushed so I knew I was a few points ahead. When in doubt, baffle them with bullshit.

"To continue, Steve, I'd like you and Susan to assume the responsibilities for the Inca site - Cerro Quinga. You will have a crew of ten campesinos, more if I can arrange it. I want to emphasize that this site is the major reason for our presence here. It'll be a lot of work but I know you two can handle it." I stroked

his ego and gave him some window dressing. I hoped that that would be enough to keep him off my back. His beaming grin told me I was right to assign him that plum. At least he still thought it was a plum.

"That leaves the survey aspect of the project in the capable hands of Cathy and Peter. Each of you will have one assistant. I think it would be most efficient if you divided the plateau between you and operated independent of one another. I'll leave it up to you to decide who gets what area. Before you firm it up though, let's sit down and talk about it. I can tell you some things about the topography that'll make the work go faster. Roberto here will work with me. Rosa will stay in Otuzco and handle the food. Genaro, you will do the usual drafting and photography bits. I want you to be free to trouble-shoot for us in Trujillo and Otuzco. Agreed?" Genaro nodded. He was on my side and would back up anything I said. I lied. He swore to it. Such was our working relationship.

"Is there any questions about the jobs...or bitches for that matter. If there are, now's the time to hash it out." Another pseudo-democratic moment.

"No bitches but I would like to know why Genaro was involved in the decision-making process. What are his qualifications?" Steve was going to be a pain in the ass. I hadn't realized he was a racist too.

"Simple Steve. He has worked for ten years on various projects in this area. He also speaks Spanish well and understands the needs of the project and the local people. I rely on his judgement for those reasons. But, I want to make things clear. He has input, yes. I make the decisions on the basis of his advice and my own experience. If things go haywire, it is my responsibility and mine alone." I adopted the air of an autocrat for that speech. I wanted everyone to know the extent of my power and Genaro's influence.

"I assigned each of you jobs in the project based on our needs, your interests, talents and experience. A healthy dose of gut instinct had a lot to do with those assignments. Genaro, in many ways, is my conscience and guide. For example, I was hesitant to give you Cerro Quinga. Genaro persuaded me to put you on it. He was impressed by that article you wrote on Cuzco. He told me you had an understanding of the Inca unsurpassed in this group. Does that answer your question?"

"Yes, it does. I guess I was ... uh ... a bit crass in suggesting Genaro was unqualified. I apologize."

"Accepted." Genaro replied in perfect English. He winked at me. Cathy caught the gesture and raised her eyebrow. How much human communication is nonverbal? I kept silent for a few moments to allow time for the questions to form in the student's minds. There are always questions but the first one must be asked to start the flow. I had one prearranged.

"Judy, yesterday you asked me a question. I asked you to hold onto it. Can you ask it now?"

"Sure. I told you that we all had a vague notion of what we were going to be doing and where. Yesterday, I asked for some details on how things were going to work."

"I've given each of you an area of responsibility. Now is the time to put it altogether for you. The Carabamba Plateau is wedged between the Moche and

Viru River valleys at an altitude of 13 to 15 thousand feet. That plateau will be our center of operations. Unfortunately, conditions there are extremely primitive."

"How primitive?" Someone asked.

"Tent camp. Nearest water source 3 to 4 miles away, food locally unavailable, etc., and so on. The usual stuff." I could see puzzlement on some faces and knowing nods coming from others. How easy it was to see who had done serious hard time research and who hadn't.

"The nearest town with facilities we need - like a lab, food and all that - is Otuzco. The trip from the plateau to Otuzco takes between four and six hours so we won't be able to do it too often. Otuzco is across the Moche and sits at about 11 thousand feet. It's a good intermediate altitude for a resupply, R and R location. A standard work rotation will go something like this: Monday morning, we leave Otuzco for Carabamba where we will stay for ten days. We will work all ten days although the Peruvians with us will have Sunday off. The second Wednesday afternoon, all material and information we collect will go back with us to Otuzco. Thursday...Friday will be used for note taking and catch up. Midday, we head for the coast...for Trujillo. The weekends here are yours to do with as you wish but we are all expected to be ready Sunday night or Monday morning to head back to the plateau....Oh, while in Trujillo, you will be expected to pay your own bills. In the field, we cover them."

Susan jumped in: "Do we have to go to the coast every second weekend? It sounds like it could get expensive."

"No. It is not mandatory but neither is it expensive. You will be hard pressed to spend \$20.00. You can stay in Otuzco but I do believe you will all want to go."

"Why?"

"There are certain things necessary to North Americans available in Trujillo that you cannot get in Otuzco...the most important of which is a hot shower." The groans from several of the students told me I had made my point but I felt inclined to elaborate.

"We will be staying at a pension in Otuzco that gets its water from a mountain spring. It is piped into the ground floor where there are showers for your use. However, the water is the next best thing to ice. Hot water for washing has to be heated on the stove. After two weeks, the money spent on hotel rooms with showers becomes an important investment in cleanliness and mental health."

"Speaking of being clean, Patrick, what facilities will be available at the worksite itself?" Steve was looking concerned.

"Only what the group can come up with." I shrugged and a couple of people, the experienced ones, laughed softly. When the buzz died down, Peter asked:

"I've never worked at high altitude before. What can we expect up there?"

"It's hard to say exactly. Everyone reacts differently. You have to remember always that the air is thin...the oxygen rare. When you get into a precarious position - and you will - keep that in mind and move slowly. One fast move and you could blackout. I'd hate to find you at the bottom of a 1000 foot

deep quebrada. I don't mean to frighten you. It's not all that bad if you're careful. Oh, and buy a hat."

"A hat? Patrick, that's silly." Susan exclaimed. Her mind was working but not the same everyone else's was. I'm sure she was objecting because a hat would clash with her wardrobe.

"Why a hat?" Judy asked.

"I used to wonder that myself. The first time I went up there, I received the same advice. I ignored it. It took only a few days for me to learn the hard way. The air up there is thin, right?" Several nodded. "Gringos, light skinned folk like us, don't tan up there...we burn. There is no protection from the ultraviolet rays of the sun. We will be out all day every day. After an hour or so, it will be possible to peel the entire layer of red burnt skin off your face. Without a hat, that process of burn and peel will begin again almost immediately after you've peeled the first layer off. You could lose several layers of skin per day. I would suggest and urge you to go out today and get the hats. There are none available in Otuzco."

Steve came to my aid. I was surprised.

"Makes sense. I, for one, will take your advice."

"Good. Maybe you'll take the group over to the market and act as interpreter/guide?" I laughed "...mostly so the rich gringos don't get ripped off too badly."

"Sure. No problem. He smiled at me and for just a moment, we understood each other and what this was all about. It passed.

"Shall we go?" He asked Susan. From the way they looked at each other, I caught the impression we had a thing starting up. I hoped it wouldn't be trouble. The meeting started to break up so I asked for more questions. There weren't any so I reminded them that we were scheduled to leave within the next day or two. They filed out of the room. I spoke to Genaro and Roberto briefly about some last minute things.

As they left, I turned to get my notebook. Cathy was still in her chair. She obviously had something on her mind. I waited.

"Patrick,...would you...would you help me find a hat?" That wasn't it but it was a start.

"Sure." We both hesitated. She wasn't going to continue so I decided to dive in. "Something is bothering you and it ain't no hat." I stated flippantly and instantly regretted it. She looked hurt. I was never very talented at saying the right things the right way. "I'm sorry." I sat across from her. "You want to talk?"

"No!...yes...Do you remember Huarmey?" I nodded but said nothing.

"...and the beach?" She was wrestling with something but what I didn't know. To give her time to get it together, I commented:

"Yes. I took you to the beach and showed you the Southern Cross. We talked for a while. What about it?" I was fishing. She straightened up. Here it comes. I braced myself for whatever it was as she looked me right into my eyes.

"Have you been avoiding me?...we seemed close that night. I could feel it. There was a bond there...an emotional bond. You can't deny it!" I didn't. "That night was right. It was good. I know you stepped back when I invited you into my room. I thought maybe...maybe you were just tired. Now, I'm not so sure." I

started to answer but she cut me off. She was moving and wasn't about to surrender the momentum.

"Let me finish, please. It's important to me." She took a breath. "Ever since Huarmey, it's like I ceased to exist for you. All you had to do was smile at me and I would have followed you anywhere...but...but you ignored me...Looked right through me like I was invisible. What's going on, Patrick? What did I do wrong?"

She was done. It was her turn to wait. I laughed softly and looked at her. She was beautiful and I thought I might be falling in love. I decided to be up front just in case. One usually has to be careful because people forced together under intense and primitive conditions fall in and out of love with regularity. Mostly it's hormonal but once in a while, it's the real thing. It was too early to tell.

"Catherine." I used the full name to establish a level of sincerity and seriousness. "Catherine, I have not been intentionally avoiding you. I had one hell of a lot to do and as usual, not enough time to get it done. When I work, I see nothing except the task at hand. I shut out the world until the job is finished."

She seemed satisfied with that explanation but I wasn't. It was almost a lie. Before she could say anything, I went on.

"I have not been intentionally avoiding you. That's true but unconsciously, I don't know....You scare me, lady. You are beautiful, intelligent, and compassionate. We fit together well but..." I trailed off.

"But what?" She, in turn, was braced for whatever I had to say. It was clear she was expecting a sledgehammer blow. I gathered my strength. This being up front stuff was no picnic.

"But, we are thrown together for four months with no escape if things go sour...And I have a heavy responsibility to the project that may be interfered with. Also, you are the daughter of my supervisor who could destroy my career to protect your virtue. And then,..."

She laughed harshly. Her tone was sarcastic and biting.

"If you had any idea how often I've heard that line. I had not expected it from you."

"I don't give a damn who your father is but I wanted you to know it went through my mind. It is a factor...but not an important one. There are others..." She stood up. She was angry. I could see things going sour before they even got started.

"If my father doesn't mean anything,...is an unimportant factor,... then why didn't we sleep together that night. You refused my..."

"I refused your invitation for a casual roll in the hay because that's not what I want from you." I paused for air. Both of us considered that statement. Until it was said, my motives had been unclear. Now they weren't. I wanted her to know too. I stood up, crossed to the window and turned.

"Look Cathy, I am not a prude. I enjoy casual, recreational sex as much as the next person but if I want that, I can pick up someone at a bar. I do not have casual sex with people I like. I'm not sure how I feel about you. I don't know ... If ... I ..." I faltered but regrouped quickly. I had to get through it. "I turned you down in Huarmey because I do not want to screw you!" Crude but correct. She looked

at me for a moment as she made a decision. She came over and threw her arms around me.

"Patrick Hardy, you are a silly, romantic fool. " We held each other then she pushed me away.

"Now, let's go buy me a hat. I'll meet you in the lobby in five minutes." She walked to the door and paused. She shot me a dazzling smile and left. I was drained. I sat down.

"Good speech. Tell me, Patrico. How come the gringo always gets the girl?" Genaro was standing in the doorway.

"You heard?"

"Si, amigo. She is beautiful and if I were you, I'd hang onto her pretty tight...Can I ask you a question?" I looked at him. The expression on his face was serious. I nodded.

"Is it for real?"

"I don't know. Genaro, it is a strange feeling."

"Si. If I can give you some advice, go slowly. Love has to grow slowly to be strong. Be careful, my friend. Love can be painful as well as good."

He was so serious, I had to laugh.

"Look at us. Two incurable romantics...acting like fools."

"You are right. I think by now your lady is downstairs waiting for you. Take the afternoon off. Get to know her. She is worth the investment. Adios." He was gone.

I took Genaro's advice. I showed Cathy the Trujillo I knew. She clung to my arm like a little kid at Disneyland. I took her to the market. To tourists, it is one square block of chaos. To a local, it is as organized and as efficient as a department store. I briefly explained the layout to her and she reacted with excitement. We had to stop at every stall to examine the wares. She wanted to know everything about everything. We finally made it to the haberdashery area. She must have tried on every hat in every stall finally settling for a straw fedora. I let her try her hand at bargaining. She did not do well but she had a good time. I have to admit that the fedora was stunning on her. We left the market and just sort of wandered up and down the streets of Trujillo. The hours went by as if minutes. Finally, we took a break. A park bench on the town square served as a temporary roost. The sun was low in the west and the plaza took on a golden glow.

"Tired?" Cathy asked.

"A bit. Hungry mostly. Want to go for dinner?" She nodded so I asked where she'd like to go. She left the choice up to me. After a brief moment of indecision, I jumped up. Flagging down a cab, I pushed Cathy inside.

"Huanchaco, por favor. El Pollo del Oro." The cabdriver nodded. He apparently approved of my choice. After a long look, he also approved of Cathy. With a grin, he asked me if I wanted to get there quickly or very, very slowly. My grin matched his. I told him we were in a hurry to get there but would not be in a hurry to get back. He agreed to pick us up in a couple of hours at the boat house. As we drove along the Huanchaco Boulevard, Cathy asked:

"What were you two talking about? I'm jealous of the way you can talk to these people."

"It takes time and practice, that's all. If you work at it, your Spanish will be as good or better than mine in no time." She shook her head.

"That's not what I meant. You seem to be able to communicate with them as an equal. They accept you. I can learn Spanish but I'll always be a gringa."

For a moment, I considered changing my choice of restaurant. Our going there could be seen by her as me showing off after what she had said. I opted for a warning instead.

"We are going to a place owned by friends. There is bound to be a fuss, so ... if that is going to bother you, maybe we should go somewhere else?"

"Don't be silly. I want to meet all of your friends. Do you think they'll like me?"

Oh oh. I wondered if things weren't moving a bit fast. I didn't have time to answer her question or consider mine. We had arrived. I reminded the cab driver of our agreement and we went inside.

The Pollo del Oro is a massive barn-like structure sitting on the beach roughly 100 yards from the water's edge. It was filled with people. The usual state of affairs for this popular restaurant. The noise level was staggering.

Business was brisk for Pablo Negra and his family. I looked around for an empty table.

"Patrico!"

I flinched. I had, for Cathy's and my sake, hoped to sneak in unnoticed but I should have known better. Marta sees all.

"Patrico! You look wonderful!" I was hugged by a whirling figure that burst from the crowd. Dressed in deep red, she was as beautiful as I'd remembered. Pablo's wife was the ultimate in Trujillo high society and one of my best friends. We had been classmates during our undergraduate days. She released me when she saw Cathy.

"Perdonemme Patrico. Anglaise o Espanole?"

"English please Marta ... and you look great in either language."

"Flatterer!" There was an awkward silence as the two women studied one another.

"Well," Marta broke the silence.

"Introduce us." She demanded.

"Oh yeah. Marta Negra ... Catherine Michaelson."

They nodded to one another rather coldly, I thought. The moment was awkward for me. Thank God Marta had class. She looked at me and then at Cathy. She burst into uncontrolled laughter. Taking Cathy's arm, she said:

"Relax, Caterina. I am taken. This gringo is all yours. Now come. I have a table perfect for two lovers." I blushed but followed the women who by now were chatting like old friends. Adversity had been replaced with camaraderie in short order. We were led to a room in the back. It contained only one table elegantly set out in red and gold. We were being honored with the private suite. Marta drew Cathy to the window. It looked out over the Pacific.

"If my knowledge of this 'gringo guerilla' is accurate, and it is, after supper, you will be taken out there." She pointed to a long sand spit that extended into the ocean at right angles to the beach.

"There you will stare at the stars and into each other's eyes ..." Cathy didn't like this conversation. The furrows of her brow deepened and I did my best to fade into the woodwork.

"I didn't know this was a regular thing for ..." Her eyes were like ice.

"No, no, Caterina. You mistake my meaning. I have known my guerilla for many, many years. He comes here to the beach often, ...always alone." She emphasized that last phrase and I silently blessed her for that.

"Without fail, he goes out there, to that spit. He comes back one, two, three hours later to say goodnight. I ask but never does he tell me what he does there ... nor will he take me with him. For years, it has been a mystery for me."

"They both looked at me and I shrugged.

"No big deal, honest!" They didn't believe me.

"So," Marta went on conspiratorially, "He will take you there tonight. He won't leave you sitting here alone. When you come back ... you tell me about it. Okay?" They laughed. I was witnessing the birth of a friendship.

"Now you eat. When you are done, Pablo and I will join you for a drink, if that is okay?" I tried to get a word in edgewise but I failed.

"I will order for you both. All you do is enjoy." She kissed us both and the whirlwind was gone. The room was like the jalca after a storm ... calm, quiet, serene. Cathy looked at me and shook her head.

"You should have warned me. When I saw here, I wanted to kill you ... She is so beautiful."

"Not as beautiful as you, Cathy." I said in all seriousness. The light in the room made her glow. Her features went soft.

"Thank you, Patrick." She reached across the table for my hand.

"You know the right things to say." I got up and went around the table. I kissed her forehead.

"... and do." She added. Cathy was really good for my ego. I sat down again.

"Why did you bring me here?"

"Later, Cathy. Can we save that question for later?" She looked puzzled but acquiesced.

"Okay then, I have another question for you. Marta called you a 'gringo guerilla'. What was that all about?"

"I was hoping you wouldn't notice that. It's a long story."

"Let's hear it. I'm interested ... If you won't tell me, I'll ask Marta."

"Threats? I will not bow to blackmail ... but I will tell you a story. It began about ten years ago at Carleton University ... in Ottawa. Both Marta and I were Freshmen. I was studying anthropology and she was learning English. We hit it off ... ah ... as friends. She is actually responsible for my interest in all things Peruvian. She bought me my first book on Peru. Anyway, that's irrelevant. In our third year, I got a chance to come down here for the first time. Marta was going home for the summer too. Her name was Marta Ortega then but she was already betrothed to Pablo. He was a student at the university here and very active in APRA, the underground democratic movement. It was very popular with students back then."

"Midway through the summer, which I remind you is winter here, Marta came charging into camp. I was working only a few miles up the valley from here. She told me that the guardia had raided a demonstration in Trujillo and arrested Pablo. She asked me to help. I admit I was in love with Marta but she loved Pablo. That's why we were and are just friends. I couldn't refuse her. I commandeered Genaro and we headed into town. Marta put us in touch with two other students. They were both activists in APRA. They told us where they were holding Pablo and some others. They were in a jail in Pacasmayo ... You remember the jail in Huarmey?"

"All too clearly."

"Pacasmayo was pretty much the same ... older ... dirtier ... Marta wanted us to get Pablo out of there. The APRA guys had guns and wanted to blast in and out. They were loco ... crazy fanatics."

"We, Genaro and I, got rid of them and talked to Marta alone. The three of us decided to try the peaceful approach ... otherwise, Pablo would end up a fugitive for the rest of his life. A plan agreed upon, Marta went home and Genaro and I headed for Pacasmayo. We got there about midnight ... Are you sure you

want to hear this piece of ancient history?" I stopped. She looked at my face for a moment before she answered.

"I'd like to hear it. It brings back some painful memories, doesn't it?"

"In a way ... but," I shrugged "because APRA was quite active in those days and the government touchy, Genaro and I knew that the possibility of our plan working was almost zero ... We sort of improvised as we went along. At the police station, Genaro went in alone. He posed as a cousin and, with a few yankee dollars, managed to discover that Pablo was there, and more importantly, all of the records were still in the office. The Prefecto hadn't decided how to charge them yet."

"We got our gear together and went back inside. The cop on duty recognized Genaro and was too relaxed. Before he knew what was happening, I pulled a gun. We disarmed him. Tied him to his chair. We couldn't find the keys on him so we assumed they were hung up in the back. I went in first and got hit in the head. There was another guard in the back and he'd heard his friend protest as we tied him up." I touched the back of my head at the memory.

"Genaro had managed to stay out of sight and I guess the guard thought I was alone. When he opened the cell to add me to his collection, Genaro jumped him. We knocked him out and pushed him out the back door into the alley. We released the students. We grabbed an undisciplined Pablo to the door. Genaro reminded me of the reports so I went back in and set fire to the file cabinets. That's it. We took Pablo back to Marta and everyone lived happily ever after."

"That is only half the story, my friend." Pablo stood in the doorway, Marta under his wing.

"Buenas noches, Caterina. I am that stupid Pablo who foolishly played at being a revolutionary. My friends, Patrico and Genaro, risked much to save me ... and as always, he ..." Pablo meant me, " ... he leaves out the most exciting part of the story."

"Come on, Pablo. It's no big deal!" I pleaded.

"Oh, but it is ... You see, Caterina, I was taught an important lesson by this gringo that night. From him I learned compassion."

Cathy expressed her interest in hearing the rest of the tale and my protests fell on deaf ears. Pablo went on. I got up and crossed to the window. I watched the waves as he told the story. Marta came over and stood beside me. She kissed my cheek softly in recognition of the pain I felt.

"The three of us were outside, waiting to make sure the other students got away. It was risky because the smoke and the fire were attracting attention. Suddenly, Patrico yells at Genaro to get the car started and he dashes back into the guardia building. It was all in flames by this time and I think that this gringo friend of Marta's is loco, nuts ... but we do what he says. Genaro always has done what the gringo told him to."

"We sit in the car across the courtyard waiting. I want to leave ... to escape. Genaro says no. We wait. Minutes go by. A crowd is forming. Finally, I see him. Patrico sees us and runs for it. Other guardia see him and open fire. Patrico falls in the courtyard. Genaro drives to where he is and I throw him in the car. Bullets are flying everywhere but we are lucky. Thank God we were not hit."

"We escape and go to Marta's. Patrico has a wound in the leg but it was not too serious. I ask the gringo why he went back. I was angry that he placed us in danger by returning to the building. He tells me we left a cop tied up inside and the fire would have killed him. Patrico saved the guardia constable, his enemy, ... no, my enemy, at a great risk to his own life. I ask why risk so much for an enemy who can identify us. Patrico simply says no man deserves to die just to make our lives easier. He would say no more."

The room was quiet and I felt acutely uncomfortable. Marta squeezed my arm, and being the smooth social manipulator she is, altered the subject.

"I have known this man for many years, at university and here ... yet never have I seen him with a gringa. You must be very special, Caterina."

Cathy blushed and shook her head.

"No, I'm not. I'm just a regular Canadian girl."

"Come now," piped in Pablo, "I do not see a regular gringa. I see a very beautiful woman who has captured Patrico's heart."

"Stop Pablo. You are embarrassing them. Look. They are both blushing like young lovers." Marta laughed.

"Tell us about yourself. We are curious."

"There isn't much to tell really. I am from Vancouver ... lived there most of my life. I am an archaeologist ... went to school at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser. My dad is the Chairman of the Department there." That raised eyebrows.

"Now, I'm doing my Ph.D. at the University of Maine."

"You have done fieldwork in Peru before?" Marta asked.

"No. I've done a lot of work in Canada and ... I wanted to go someplace exotic ... mostly for a change. It sounded like fun. I really just wanted to do something different."

"Has our country met your expectations then?" Pablo asked.

"Uh ... My Spanish is pretty bad so sometimes I'm not sure what's going on ... but I love it here. Peru is so exciting! For a while I hated it but not anymore. I am fascinated." She launched into a description of the Huarmey affair. Both Pablo and Marta gave me some odd looks as they listened. She also told them about our day in Trujillo. It was fascinating listening to her point of view. The sound of her voice alone was captivating. She had a habit of lowering it in both volume and pitch when she talked about Peru (She seemed to have grasped the essentials of the Peruvian way of life). While listening to her, I got the feeling that maybe I was falling in love for real.

I caught Marta looking at me. I adjusted my face to mask the feelings. She shook her head and smiled. I nodded and relaxed. The conversation was lively but I didn't say much. I was happy that Cathy seemed to enjoy the Negras' company.

I looked at my watch. It was getting late and I had things to do. I said as much. Cathy wanted to stay longer but I stood firm. Marta drew Cathy aside as I said goodbye to Pablo. I couldn't hear what the women were saying. They hugged and came towards us. Marta gave me a kiss and extracted a promise to come back soon and bring the beautiful Caterina with me. We left the restaurant

and walked down the beach to the spit. Neither of us said anything. I strolled out to the end of the sand bar and scanned the water's edge. The tiny sand crabs ignored us. Seeing what I was looking for, I grunted.

"Okay. Let's go. There should be a cab waiting for us at the boathouse."

"Wait. Patrick. I want to say something." I stopped. She took a second to get organized. I used that time to try and second guess her.

"I don't know an awful lot about you," she began. The moonlight made her look appealing.

"Uh ... but I had a wonderful time today, thanks to you. I wouldn't have seen a tenth of what you showed me ... And your friends, I like them a lot." She looked into my eyes.

"Marta is a real card. You know while you were talking to Pablo, she asked me a question. She wanted to know if you and I had made love. She seemed disappointed when I said no." I was feeling very uncomfortable. I had a hunch where this conversation was going and I wasn't ready to handle it.

"The cab is waiting. Time to go." I suppose I was a bit abrupt. Cathy was angry.

"Bastard. Sometimes you are warm and caring. Other times you are ice cold. Are you afraid of a relationship, ... of me?"

"Quite possibly." I responded flatly. "I have a responsibility to the project. That requires an enormous investment in terms of my time and energy. I do not have time to get involved with anyone."

She looked for a long time. She took a step forward and put her arms on my shoulders. Things were getting too hot.

"Time to go."

"Shit! I throw myself at you and you punt. You stand there calmly and say thanks but no thanks.. What are you ... queer?"

"If you are expecting a reaction to that, forget it." I started to walk down the beach. She stood her ground.

"Patrick. I love you."

I stopped dead. Staring at the silver sparkles in the water, I felt the anger stir inside. I let it out.

"How can you love me? You do not know me. They don't know me." I pointed in the general direction of the restaurant.

"No one knows me. Damn it, Cathy, I don't know me! I am torn in a thousand directions. I am a thousand things to a thousand people. To your father, I am an archaeologist and his student. To the crew, I'm a slave driver. To Pablo and Marta, I am some sort of white knight. My father thinks I am a hippie. The Peruvians see me as a gringo. Cathy, I am none of those. You say you love me. Which me? What am I to you? How the hell can you love me?! If we sleep together, I will be your lover, Cathy's lover. The real me, the one you should know, will be buried under yet another image."

"Aren't you overreacting just a bit. I'm not asking for a long term commitment. I'm not asking you to marry me, for Christ's sake!" She was angry. I did not blame her. Emotional arguments rarely end well. This one was a disaster.

I had to change its direction if anything was going to be salvaged. It was difficult as I had no idea what I really wanted as an outcome.

"I'm trying to get you to understand something. You think you are in love. You are in love with what you think I am. If we act on that love, it would be artificial, shallow. I would feel like I was taking advantage of you."

"You sanctimonious, self righteous, self-centered son of a bitch ..." She was building up for a major tirade. She'd run out of words but was searching for more. I took advantage of the pause.

"You know you are beautiful when you are angry." I was calm. She charged, fists flailing. She beat my chest while I held her close. I held her partly to keep her from doing any serious damage. It also felt good to have my arms around her. Gradually, she calmed down. Over her head, I could see the restaurant where we'd eaten. The private suite was darkened.

"Cathy," I said softly, "I am not a white knight. I'm not perfect. I'm just a man, an ordinary man. I can be stupid, foolish, even crazy sometimes. I am stubborn and proud. Let me be all those things ... Okay?" She nodded and I kissed her lightly on the lips.

"That one was for Marta."

"What??"

"She's watching us." Before she could react, I kissed her again. I poured all I had into it. She responded in kind. When we broke, I said:

"That one was for you." We embraced.

"Come on, let's go. It's getting cold. I think we should go home and climb into a nice warm bed." I paused while she looked at me.

"...that is unless you're tired?" I winked and she punched me in the abdomen.

"You bastard!" is what she said. Her body said something different.

There were no more words until we reached my room at the hotel. We stood facing each other in the dark. Tension was high. I felt awkward like a teenager out on his first date. I was casting around for some way to break the ice when she found it. Matter of factly, she said:

"I don't know about you but I refuse to make love to anyone wearing hiking boots." We laughed and I sat on the bed to take off my boots and socks. She disappeared into the bathroom. I undid my shirt, lit a cigarette and stared out the window at the cobbled street. It was late but a few street vendors were still hawking their wares. I watched a churro cart as it wheeled down the street.

Cathy came up from behind and slid her hands down my chest. I leaned back, pressing my head into her abdomen. We looked out together for a moment. She slid past me and sat in my lap. All she wore was her plaid shirt. As we kissed, the shirt fell open exposing translucent flesh to the moonlight. She shivered a little and stood up. She let the shirt slide to the floor and took my hand. As I stood up, she took my shirt off. She kissed my shoulder and climbed onto the bed. I finished undressing and joined her.

The love making was frantic as we surrendered ourselves to each other. There was no awkwardness. When it was over, we relaxed exploring each other's bodies slowly, intimately. We made love again.

We lay in each other's arms listening to our breathing and to the night sounds of Trujillo.

"Patrick?"

"Uh huh."

"You awake?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I was just wondering what you were thinking."

I chuckled.

"I was singing an old song to myself. It goes: 'You loved me tonight like you loved me all my life'. That's sort of how I feel." She snuggled closer.

"Sometimes you know the right things to say." I laughed. It felt good to laugh.

"Patrick?"

"Uh huh."

"Can I ask you another question?" She didn't wait for an answer. "Tonight ... ah ... before we had that fight ... you seemed to be looking for something out on that spit. Why did we go out there?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"I'm just curious."

"C'mon." I suspected there was something else. I waited.

"Okay. Okay! Marta made me promise to tell her what we did out there. She's dying to know ... so, what did we do out there?"

"You really want to know what we did out there?"

"Yes."

"We fought."

"You bastard." She jumped on top of me.

"You aren't going to tell me, are you?"

"Nope." That was all I said as I pulled her down. We laughed and made love again. Later, she fell asleep with her arms and legs wrapped around me, her head on my shoulder. I watched her in the moonlight. Softly so as not to wake her, I whispered:

"Cathy, I love you."

Life was definitely getting complicated ... but what the hell. I thought about the sand bar at the beach and smiled. I knew both Cathy and Marta would not quit until they found out the secret of the spit. Let it remain a mystery for as long as possible. The reality was far too mundane for the ladies. They deserve a good mystery.

I fell asleep.

We were a bit slow getting out of bed in the morning. We were enjoying a shower together when there was a knock on the door. It was Genaro reminding me of the appointments we had lined up. He was suspicious as I am a creature of habit and ritual. I never sleep in. Something told me not to reveal anything to him yet. I agreed to meet him at the Cafe Americain in a few minutes. I called to Cathy:

"Duty calls. It's time to become super-archaeologist again. While I'm gone, could you round up the others and tell them we're to leave for Otuzco at one

o'clock. Have them check out and wait in the lobby. Genaro and I have some things to do."

She came into my arms. Her towel fell to the floor, accidentally or on purpose. I don't know. She teased:

"Such energy. Where do you get it? I'm beat ... Save some of that energy for me tonight, okay."

"It isn't going to be easy in Otuzco, sweet one. The hotel there is a lot less private." She looked disappointed so I added:

"But then, how do you feel about making love under the stars?"

"I'll leave it in your capable hands. Now, get going. I have to get dressed." She pushed me away.

"Why?" I feigned innocence, "You look great just as you are."

"Get out of here." She threw a pillow at me. I grabbed her for a farewell kiss.

"I'll see you about 1:00. Oh, ... could you do me a favor? It'll be a big test of your Spanish but I think you can handle it." I knew she couldn't resist a challenge. I was right.

"Remember that little store off the boulevard. The one that sells hardware and stuff? Good. I ordered something there yesterday. Could you pick it up for me? Tell them you want the package that Patricolindo arranged."

"Don't tell me they are friends of yours too?"

I shrugged, kissed her again and left. Genaro was waiting at the restaurant. After a quick coffee, we began our travels. We dashed hither and yon trying to get last minute supplies and tie up loose ends. By 12:30 we were done. Genaro complained that he hadn't had any lunch. I promised him a dinner of cuy in Otuzco on me and he was placated. He enjoys costing the gringo money.

I took a stab in the dark.

"Genaro, how much did Dr. Michaelson pay you to keep an eye on his daughter in his absence?"

"Me, amigo?" He said innocently. "He was cheap. He gives me \$15.00 American for that." I shook my head.

"How much information does he get for \$15.00?"

"nada. Nothing. His daughter is a paragon of virtue ... went to bed at 10:00 every night ... spoke to no one. For \$15.00 he gets \$15.00 worth of bullshit." He winked. "I was hurt when you tried to hide her from me this morning but you were right to do it. Had the good professor been less stingy, I would have obliged ..." He had his hand on his heart.

"Genaro, you are such a crook."

"Si, but I am also a good friend." He was serious.

"Si, a good friend. Now let us gather the gringos and gringas and head for Otuzco. After all, I promised my friend a big fat cuy for supper."

"My mouth is watering already. Mas aya, amigo."

The students were chattering away like monkeys as we loaded the suitcases and gear into the vehicles. Watching a crowd of excited grade school kids wouldn't have been much different. We were just about set when Roberto tapped me on my shoulder.

"Could I speak to you for a moment? It is important."

"Shoot. What's up?"

"My mother has a cousin in Otuzco and wants me to take some things to him. I said I couldn't do it but she made me promise to try." He shrugged.

"It is one big box ... made of wood. I cannot bring it in the colectivo with me ... too big ... I wonder ... could you? Is it possible?"

"Is that the box?" I pointed to the one strapped to the roof of Roberto's mother's car.

"Si."

"Sure. Throw it on the roof rack of Genaro's car. We'll take it up for you."

"Muchas gracias. I will see you later then."

"Adios Roberto." I looked around. It was time to go.

"Let's roll, Genaro. I'll see you up there and ... no joy riding." I joked. As yet only he and I knew 40 miles per hour was the fastest anyone dared on that road.