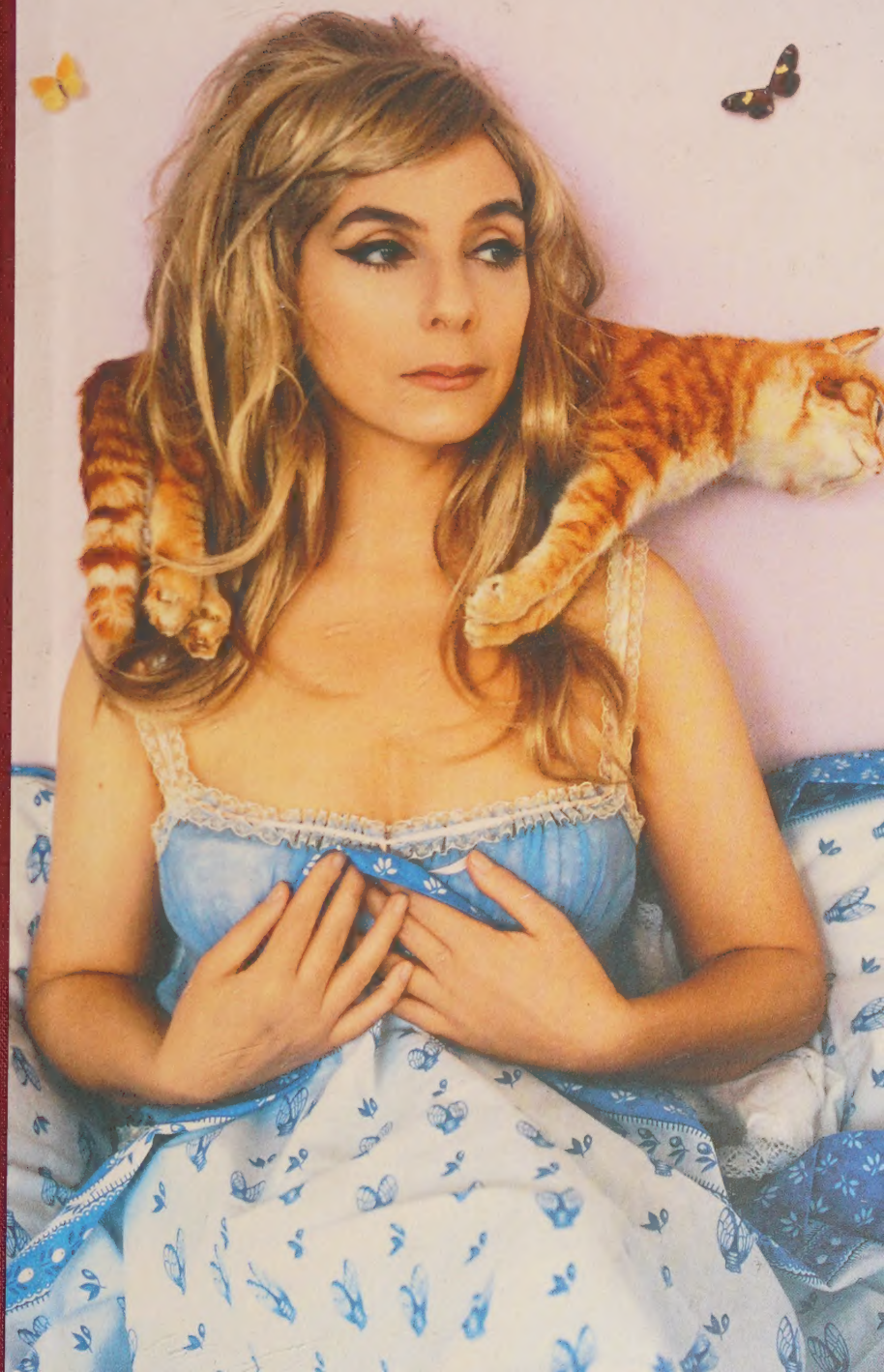




KIDDERMINSTER COLLEGE



052520

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TO FRANK GEHRY

**LEARNING RESOURCES CENTRE
KIDDERMINSTER COLLEGE**

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The author extends special thanks
to Paul Auster for permission to mingle fiction
with fact.

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THE RULES OF THE GAME

In his 1992 novel *Leviathan*, Paul Auster thanks me for having authorized him to mingle fact with fiction.

And indeed, on pages 60 to 67 of his book, he uses a number of episodes from my life to create a fictive character named Maria, who then leaves me to live out her own story. Intrigued by this double, I decided to turn Paul Auster's novel into a game and to make my own particular mixture of reality and fiction.

I

*The life of Maria and how it
influenced the life of Sophie*

In *Leviathan*, Maria puts herself through the same rituals as I did. But Paul Auster has slipped some rules of his own inventing into his portrait of Maria. In order to bring Maria and myself closer together, I decided to go by the book. The author imposes on his creature a chromatic regimen which consists in restricting herself to foods of a single color for any given day. I followed his instructions. He has her base whole days on a single letter of the alphabet. I did as she does.

II

*The life of Sophie and how it
influenced the life of Maria*

The rituals that Auster "borrowed" from me to shape Maria are: *The Wardrobe*, *The Striptease*, *To Follow...*, *Suite vénitienne*, *The Detective*, *The Hotel*, *The Address Book*, and *The Birthday Ceremony*. *Leviathan* gives me the opportunity to present these artistic projects that inspired the author and which Maria and I now share.

III

*One of the many ways of mingling
fact with fiction, or how to try to
become a character out of a novel*

Since, in *Leviathan*, Auster has taken me as a subject, I imagined swapping roles and taking him as the author of my actions. I asked him to invent a fictive character which I would attempt to resemble. I was, in effect, inviting Paul Auster to do what he wanted with me, for a period of up to a year at most. Auster objected that he did not want to take responsibility for what might happen when I acted out the role he had created for me. Instead, he preferred to send me "Personal Instructions for S.C. on How to Improve Life in New York City (Because she asked ...)". I followed his directives. This project is entitled *Gotham Handbook*.

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Sophie Calle

Double Game

With the participation of Paul Auster

Violette Editions / D. A. P.

Contents

001 The Rules of the Game

008 Leviathan

I

012 The Chromatic Diet

022 Days Under the Sign of B, C, & W

II

034 The Wardrobe

044 The Striptease

068 To Follow...

076 Suite vénitienne

122 The Detective

140 The Hotel

186 The Address Book

196 The Birthday Ceremony

III

233 Gotham Handbook

PAUL AUSTER

Leviathan



faber and faber

LONDON · BOSTON

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Maria was an artist, but the work she did had nothing to do with creating objects commonly defined as art. Some people called her a photographer, others referred to her as a conceptualist, still others considered her a writer, but none of these descriptions was accurate, and in the end I don't think she can be pigeonholed in any way. Her work was too nutty for that, too idiosyncratic, too personal to be thought of as belonging to any particular medium or discipline. Ideas would take hold of her, she would work on projects, there would be concrete results that could be shown in galleries, but this activity didn't stem from a desire to make art so much as from a need to indulge her obsessions, to live her life precisely as she wanted to live it. Living always came first, and a number of her most time-consuming projects were done strictly for herself and never shown to anyone.

Since the age of ²⁷~~fourteen~~, she had saved all the birthday presents that had ever been given to her – still wrapped, neatly arranged on shelves according to the year. As an adult, she held an annual birthday dinner in her own honor, always inviting the same number of guests as her age. Some weeks, she would indulge in what she called 'the chromatic diet,' restricting herself to foods of a single color on any given day. Monday orange: carrots, cantaloupe, boiled shrimp. Tuesday red: tomatoes, persimmons, steak tartare. Wednesday white: flounder, potatoes, cottage cheese. Thursday green: cucumbers, broccoli, spinach –

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She had grown up in ^{Paris} Holyoke, Massachusetts, the only child of parents who divorced when she was ³ six. After graduating from high school in 1970, she had gone down to ^{university} New York with the ~~idea of attending art school and becoming a painter~~, but she lost interest after one term and dropped out. She ~~bought herself a secondhand Dodge van and took off on a tour of the American continent, staying for exactly two weeks in each state, finding temporary work along the way whenever possible – waitressing jobs, migrant farm jobs, factory jobs, earning just enough to keep her going from one place to the next. It was the first of her mad, compulsive projects, and in some sense it stands as the most extraordinary thing she ever did: a totally meaningless and arbitrary act to which she devoted almost two years of her life. Her only ambition was to spend fourteen days in every state, and~~ ^{more or less one year} ^{world} ^{disappear} ^{countries} ^{excessive again}

beyond that she was free to do whatever she wanted. ~~Doggedly and dispassionately, never questioning the absurdity of her task, Maria stuck it out to the end.~~ She was just nineteen when she started, a young girl entirely on her own, and yet she managed to fend for herself and avoid major catastrophes, living the sort of adventure that boys her age only dream of. At one point in her travels, a co-worker gave her an old thirty-five millimeter camera, and without any prior training or experience, she began taking photographs. When she saw her father in ~~(Chicago)~~ ^(San Francisco) a few months after that, she told him that she had finally found something she liked doing. She showed him some of her photographs, and on the strength of those early attempts, he offered to make a bargain with her. If she went on taking photographs, he said, he would cover her expenses until she was in a position to support herself. It didn't matter how long it took, but she wasn't allowed to quit. That was the story she told me in any case, and I never had grounds to disbelieve it. ~~All during the years of our affair,~~ a deposit of ~~one thousand dollars~~ ^{700 francs} showed up in Maria's account on the first of every month, ~~wired directly from a bank in Chicago.~~

She returned to ~~New York,~~ ^{Paris} sold her van, and moved into ~~the loft on Duane Street, a large empty room located on the floor above a wholesale egg and butter business.~~ ^{her father's apartment} The first months were lonely and disorienting for her. She had no friends, no life to speak of, and the city seemed menacing and unfamiliar, as if she had never been there before. Without any conscious motives, she began following strangers around the streets, choosing someone at random when she left her house in the morning and allowing that choice to determine where she went for the rest of the day. It became a method of acquiring new thoughts, of filling up the emptiness that seemed to have engulfed her. Eventually, she began going out with her camera and taking pictures of the people she followed. When she returned home in the evening, she would sit down and write about where she had been and what she had done, using the strangers' itineraries to speculate about their lives and, in some cases, to compose brief, imaginary biographies. That was more or less how Maria stumbled into her

career as an artist. Other works followed, all of them driven by the same spirit of investigation, the same passion for taking risks. Her subject was the eye, the drama of watching and being watched, and her pieces exhibited the same qualities one found in Maria herself: meticulous attention to detail, a reliance on arbitrary structures, patience bordering on the unendurable. In one work, she ^{asked her mother to} hired a private detective to follow her around the city. For ¹several days, this man took pictures of her as she went about her rounds, recording her movements in a small notebook, omitting nothing from the account, not even the most banal and transitory events: crossing the street, buying a newspaper, stopping for a cup of coffee. It was a completely artificial exercise, and yet Maria found it thrilling that anyone should take such an active interest in her. Microscopic actions became fraught with new meaning, the driest routines were charged with uncommon emotion. After several hours, she grew so attached to the detective that she almost forgot she was paying him. When he handed in his report at the end of the week and she studied the photographs of herself and read the exhaustive chronologies of her movements, she felt as if she had become a stranger, as if she had been turned into an imaginary being.

For her next project, Maria took a temporary job as a chambermaid in a large ^{Venice} ~~midtown~~ hotel. The point was to gather information about the guests, but not in any intrusive or compromising way. She intentionally avoided them in fact, restricting herself to what could be learned from the objects scattered about their rooms. Again she took photographs; again she invented life stories for them based on the evidence that was available to her. It was an archeology of the present, so to speak, an attempt to reconstitute the essence of something from only the barest fragments: a ticket stub, a torn stocking, a blood stain on the collar of a shirt. Some time ^{before} ~~after~~ that, ^(she followed) a man ~~tried to pick up~~ Maria on the street. ~~She found him distinctly unattractive and rebuffed him.~~ That same evening, by pure coincidence, she ran into him at a gallery opening in ^{SoHo} ~~SoHo~~. They talked ~~once again~~, and ~~this time~~ she learned from the man that he was leaving ^{soon} ~~the next morning~~.

on a trip to ^{venice} New Orleans with his girlfriend. Maria would go there as well, she decided, and follow him around with her camera for the entire length of his visit. She had absolutely no interest in him, and the last thing she was looking for was an amorous adventure. Her intention was to keep herself hidden, to resist all contact with him, to explore his outward behavior and make no effort to interpret what she saw. The next ^{week} morning, she caught a ^{train} flight from LaGuardia to ^{venice} New Orleans, checked into a hotel, and bought herself a ^{blonde} black wig. For three days she made inquiries at dozens of hotels, trying to track down the man's whereabouts. She discovered him at last, and for the rest of the week she walked behind him like a shadow, taking hundreds of photographs, documenting every place he went to. She kept a written diary as well, and when the time came for him to go back to ^{Paris} New York, she returned on an earlier ^{train} flight – in order to be waiting at the ^{train station} airport for a last sequence of pictures as he stepped off the ^{train} plane. It was a complex and disturbing experience for her, and it left her feeling that she had abandoned her life for a kind of nothingness, as though she had been taking pictures of things that weren't there. The camera was no longer an instrument that recorded presences, it was a way of making the world disappear, a technique for encountering the invisible. Desperate to undo the process she had set in motion, Maria launched into a new project just days after returning to ^{Paris} New York. Walking through ^{Piccadilly} Times Square with her camera one afternoon, she got into a conversation with the doorman of a ^{strip joint} topless go-go bar. The weather was warm, and Maria was dressed in shorts and a T-shirt, an unusually skimpy outfit for her. But she had gone out that day in order to be noticed. She wanted to affirm the reality of her body, to make heads turn, to prove to herself that she still existed in the ^{la-tiens} eyes of others. Maria was well put together, with long legs and attractive breasts, and the whistles and lewd remarks she received that day helped to revive her spirits. The doorman told her that she was a pretty girl, just as pretty as the girls inside, and as their conversation continued, she suddenly found herself being offered a job. One of the dancers had called in sick, he said,

and if she wanted to fill in for her, he'd introduce her to the boss and see if something couldn't be worked out. Scarcely pausing to think about it, Maria accepted. That was how her next work came into being, a piece that eventually came to be known as *The Naked Lady*.^{Strip tease} Maria asked a friend to come along ^{one} that night and take pictures of her as she performed – not to show anyone, but for herself, in order to satisfy her own curiosity about what she looked like. She was consciously turning herself into an object, a nameless figure of desire, and it was crucial to her that she understand precisely what that object was. She only did it ^{a month} that once, working in twenty-minute shifts from eight o'clock in the evening until two in the morning, but she didn't hold back, and the whole time she was on stage, perched behind the bar with colored strobe lights bouncing off her bare skin, she danced her heart out. Dressed in a rhinestone G-string and a pair of two-inch heels, she shook her body to ^{a tango} loud-rock and roll and watched the men stare at her. She wiggled her ass at them, she ran her tongue over her lips, she winked seductively as they slipped her dollar bills and urged her on. As with everything else she tried, Maria was good at it. Once she got herself going, there was hardly any stopping her.

As far as I know, she went too far only once. That was in the spring of ¹⁹⁸³ 1976, ~~and the ultimate effects of her miscalculation proved to be catastrophic. At least two lives were lost, and even though it took years for that to happen, the connection between the past and the present is inescapable. Maria was the link between Sachs and Lillian Stern, and if not for Maria's habit of courting trouble in whatever form she could find it, Lillian Stern never would have entered the picture. After Maria turned up at Sachs's apartment in 1979, a meeting between Sachs and Lillian Stern became possible. It took several more unlikely twists before that possibility was realized, but each of them can be traced directly back to Maria.~~ Long before any of us knew her, she went out one morning to buy film for her camera, saw a little black address book lying on the ground, and picked it up. That was the event that started the whole miserable story. Maria opened the

~~book, and out flew the devil, out flew a scourge of violence, mayhem, and death.~~

It was one of those standard little address books ~~manufactured by the Schaeffer-Eaton Company~~, about six inches tall and four inches across, with a flexible imitation leather cover, spiral binding, and thumb tabs for each letter of the alphabet. It was a well-worn object, filled with over ~~two~~⁴ hundred names, addresses, and telephone numbers. The fact that many of the entries had been crossed out and rewritten, that a variety of writing instruments had been used on almost every page (blue ballpoints, black felt tips, green pencils) suggested that it had belonged to the owner for a long time. Maria's first thought was to return it, ~~but~~^{but as is often the case with personal property, the owner had neglected to write} his name in the book. She searched in all the logical places – ~~the inside front cover, the first page, the back~~ – but no name was to be found. ~~Not knowing what to do with it after that, she dropped the book into her bag and carried it home.~~ ^{but she photocopied it first.}

Most people would have forgotten about it, I think, but Maria wasn't one to shy away from unexpected opportunities, to ignore the promptings of chance. By the time she went to bed that night, she had already come up with a plan for her next project. It would be an elaborate piece, much more difficult and complicated than anything she had attempted before, but the sheer ~~scope~~^{scope} of it threw her into a state of intense excitement. She ~~was almost certain~~^{was almost} that the owner of the address book was a man. The handwriting had a masculine look to it; there were more listings for men than for women; the book was in ragged condition, as if it had been treated roughly. In one of those sudden, ridiculous flashes that everyone is prey to, she imagined that she was destined to fall in love with the owner of the book. It lasted only a second or two, but in that time she saw him as the man of her dreams: beautiful, intelligent, warm; a better man than she had ever loved before. The vision dispersed, but by then it was already too late. The book had been transformed into a magical object for her, a storehouse of obscure passions and unarticulated

desires. Chance had led her to it, but now that it was hers, she saw it as an instrument of fate.

She studied the entries that first evening and found no names that were familiar to her. That was the perfect starting point, she felt. She would set out in the dark, knowing absolutely nothing, and one by one she would talk to all the people listed in the book. By finding out who they were, she would begin to learn something about the man who had lost it. It would be a portrait *in absentia*, an outline drawn around an empty space, and little by little a figure would emerge from the background, pieced together from everything he was not. She hoped that she would eventually track him down that way, but even if she didn't, the effort would be its own reward. She wanted to encourage people to open up to her when she saw them, to tell her stories about enchantment and lust and falling in love, to confide their deepest secrets in her. She fully expected to work on these interviews for months, perhaps even for years. There would be thousands of photographs to take, hundreds of statements to transcribe, an entire universe to explore. Or so she thought. As it happened, the project was derailed after just one day.

With only one exception, every person in the book was listed under his or her last name. In among the *Ls*, however, there was an entry for someone named Lilli. Maria assumed it was a woman's first name. If that were so, then this unique departure from the directory style could have been significant, a sign of some special intimacy. What if Lilli was the girlfriend of the man who had lost the address book? Or his sister, or even his mother? Rather than go through the names in alphabetical order as she had originally planned, Maria decided to jump ahead to *L* and pay a call on the mysterious Lilli first. If her hunch was correct, she might suddenly find herself in a position to learn who the man was.

She couldn't approach Lilli directly. Too much hinged on the meeting, and she was afraid of destroying her chances by blundering into it unprepared. She had to get a sense of who this woman was before she talked to her, to see what she looked like,

I *The life of Maria and how Sophie. In Leviathan, Maria* same rituals as I did. But Pa rules of his own inventing. In order to bring Maria and I decided to go by the book his creature a chromatic reg restricting herself to foods given day. I followed his in base whole days on a single I did as she does.

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I Auster has slipped some
to his portrait of Maria,
myself closer together,
The author imposes on
men which consists in
f a single color for any
uctions. He has her
etter of the alphabet.

THE CHROMATIC DIET

To be like Maria, during the week of December on Tuesday, White on Wednesday, and Green character the other days off, I made Friday Yellow to devote it to the full spectrum of colors, setting the week.

contacts), but as time went on I understood that she was merely eccentric, an unorthodox person who lived her life according to an elaborate set of bizarre, private rituals. Every experience was systematized for her, a self-contained adventure that generated its own risks and limitations, and each one of her projects fell into a different category, separate from all the others. In my case, I belonged to the category of sex. She appointed me as her bed partner on that first night, and that was the function I continued to serve until the end. In the universe of Maria's compulsions, I was just one ritual among many, but I was fond of the role she had picked for me, and I never found any reason to complain.

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Since the age of fourteen, she had saved all the birthday presents that had ever been given to her – still wrapped, neatly arranged on shelves according to the year. As an adult, she held an annual birthday dinner in her own honor, always inviting the same number of guests as her age. Some weeks, she would indulge in what she called 'the chromatic diet,' restricting herself to foods of a single color on any given day. Monday orange: carrots, cantaloupe, boiled shrimp. Tuesday red: tomatoes, persimmons, steak tartare. Wednesday white: flounder, potatoes, cottage cheese. Thursday green: cucumbers, broccoli, spinach –

to 14, 1997, Late Orange on Monday, Red Thursday. Since Paul Auster had given his and Saturday Pink. As for Sunday, I decided but for six guests the six menus tested over

and so on, all the way through the last meal on Sunday. At other times, she would make similar divisions based on the letters of the alphabet. Whole days would be spent under the spell of *b*, *c*, or *w*, and then, just as suddenly as she had started it, she would abandon the game and go on to something else. These were no more than whims, I suppose, tiny experiments with the idea of classification and habit, but similar games were just as likely to go on for many years. There was the long-term project of dressing Mr L., for example, a stranger she had once met at a party. Maria found him to be one of the handsomest men she had ever seen, but his clothes were a disgrace, she thought, and so without announcing her intentions to anyone, she took it upon herself to improve his wardrobe. Every year at Christmas she would send him an anonymous gift – a tie, a sweater, an elegant shirt – and because Mr L. moved in roughly the same social circles that she did, she would run into him every now and again, noting with pleasure the dramatic changes in his sartorial appearance. For the fact was that Mr L. always wore the clothes that Maria sent him. She would even go up to him at these gatherings and compliment him on what he was wearing, but that was as far as it went, and he never caught on that she was the one responsible for those Christmas packages.

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MONDAY : ORANGE

Menu imposed:

Purée of carrots
Boiled prawns
Cantaloupe melon

Paul Auster forgot to mention
drinks, so I allowed myself to complete
his menu with:

Orange juice



TUESDAY : RED

Menu imposed:

Tomatoes
Steak tartare
Pomegranates

I completed the menu with:

Roasted red peppers
Lalande de Pomerol, domaine de Viaud, 1990



WEDNESDAY : WHITE

Menu imposed:

Flounder

Potatoes

Fromage blanc

I changed this menu, because I was not satisfied with the yellow color of the potatoes, and added:

Rice

Milk



THURSDAY : GREEN

Menu imposed:

Cucumber
Broccoli
Spmach

I completed the menu with:

Green basil pasta
Grapes and kiwi fruit
Mint cordial



FRIDAY : YELLOW

Since no color was prescribed
for Friday, I chose yellow.

Menu:

Afghan omelette
Potato salad
"Young Girl's Dream"
(Banana, mango ice cream)
Pschitt fizzy lemon drink



SATURDAY : PINK

Since no color was prescribed
for Saturday, I chose pink.

Menu:

Ham
Taramasalata
Strawberry ice cream
Rosé wine from Provence





SUNDAY:

ORANGE, RED,
WHITE, GREEN,
YELLOW, & PINK

Lots were drawn for the men is
and everybody acquitted
themselves conscientiously, if
without enthusiasm, at their task.
Personally, I preferred not to eat;
novels are all very well but not
necessarily so very delectable
if you live them to the letter.

To be like Maria, I spent the day of Tuesday, *Monday*, *Blonde Bimbo*; Tuesday, February 16, 1998, under the sign of B; Wednesday, March 18, 1998, under the sign of C; Thursday, March 19, 1998, under the sign of W; and Friday, March 20, 1998, under the sign of W for *Weekend in Wallonia*.

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by 10, 1998, under the sign of B for Bie-Tina
the sign of C for Calle 52 Calle in the Cemetery
Confession; on 1 Saturday, March 14, 1998,

and so on, all the way through the last meal on Sunday. At other
times, she would make similar divisions based on the letters of
the alphabet. Whole days would be spent under the spell of b, c,
or w, and then, just as suddenly as she had started it, she would
abandon the game and go on to something else. These were no
more than whims, I suppose, tiny experiments with the idea of
classification and habit, but similar games were just as likely to go
on for many years. There was the long-term project of dressing
Mr L., for example, a stranger she had once met at a party. Maria
found him to be one of the handsomest men she had ever seen,
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announcing her intentions to anyone, she took it upon herself to
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pleasure the dramatic changes in his sartorial appearance. For the
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She would even go up to him at these gatherings and compliment
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her going from one place to the next. It was the first of her mad,
compulsive projects, and in some sense it stands as the most
extraordinary thing she ever did: a totally meaningless and
arbitrary act to which she devoted almost two years of her life.
Her only ambition was to spend fourteen days in every state, and

B for Big-Time Blonde Bimbo

To be like Maria, I spent the day of Tuesday, March 10, 1998, under the sign of B by taking on the appearance of a Big-Time Blonde Bimbo. (For the model of this photograph, see *Paris Match* of November 2, 1989, and the portrait of BB, who in recent years has taken her preference for the cause of animals over that of humans to the point of caricature.)

B for Beauty and the Bestiary, for Bat, Bantam, B



for Bug, Badger, Bray, Bellow, Bleat, Bark, for Beastly Birdbrain, for BB

C for Calle & Calle in the Cemetery

Six years ago now, my father and I became the owners of a grave in Montparnasse Cemetery. I remember how long it took to choose between a tomb situated in the front row of the main alley and the one we finally settled on: it was a little more out of the way, yet not too isolated, so we would be disturbed less and, above all, because it was next to the cemetery mill and there was a bench for any visitors we might have. The bench has since disappeared but I have got into the habit of visiting my own tomb once a year to get the feel of the place. So, to be like Maria, I spent the day of Tuesday, February 16, 1998, under the sign of C for Calle and Calle in the Cemetery.

Clippety-Clop, Complicitous Cronies in Contiguous Cemetery, Coming Close to Calle's Co-purchased Concession, we Converse on Celestial Choler, not Cowed by Catastrophe, Calendar, or Condemnation. Clinking Champagne in Crystal Cups, we Contrive to Conjure Corporeal Caducity and Conquer the Creator's Clemency, Concurring that Contingence has Coddled us. Conferring Candidly over Choice of Coffin — Classic, Chic, Comfortable, Chintzy — of Corpse Coverers, of Cadaver Carriers, of Crowns and Caressing Cantilenas to be Chanted a Cappella by Choirs of Chums. We Close the Conversation by Concluding, Contrary to our Contentment: Certainly, these Cadavers, these Charnels will Cohabit Cheek to Cheek in Consummate Calm, but Caught and Cramped in this Cavity Currently Complacently Contemplated by Calle and Co. Complying with Convention, we Confidentially Consecrate Chrysanthemums and Camellias on the Cenotaph, Chalkily Calligraphing this Concise Communiqué, Comparable to a Courteous Cheerio: Ciao, Ciao .



C for Confession

To be like Maria, I decided to spend the day of Thursday, March 19, 1998, under the sign of C and I chose C for Confession.

Cordially Conciliating Contraries, the Ceremony of C Carried me to a Confessional—Careless Conduct to Confess Concerning the Creed. Curate, I Confided, the Catholic Confession Calle Could not Convert. Conserving Candour, Conceiving that Calle's Contract Consigning Confidence between Creature and Creator Contained no Certification, the Clergyman neither Consented nor Conceded, his Credo and Conscience Condemning all Capers, Casting out of Court Caricature et Cetera. Come what may, Counselling by Christian Charity, Contriving to Circumvent these Contrary Circumstances, he Commended this Compromise, Convenient and Crafty Contrivance: Cutting out Clerical Cooperation, Calle to Call Candidly for Celestial Compassion. Consequently, Circumspect and Covert, I Confided Certain Characteristic Crimes: Calamity Calle's Capacity for Capricious, Chatterbox, Cryptic, Cunning, Concupiscent, and Coquettish Conduct, Constantly Choosing to Conspire, Crack the Consensus, Cuss and Carp; Canting Cocaine Cadger, a Cynical, Cruel Character Con-demnably Crazed with Corridas. Conforming to Custom, I Crowned this Capitulatory Confab by Consecrating Copious Candles to Christ.



W for Weekend in Wallonia

To be like Maria, I chose to combine in one action all the words beginning with the letter W that I found on page 321 of my Harrap's pocket French-English dictionary, and I spent Saturday, March 14, 1998, under the sign of W for Weekend in Wallonia.

With W ou le souvenir d'enfance by Georges Perec, and a Window seat on the Wagons-lits, this Weekend I Wended my Way in a restaurant Wagon to Walloon Liège. Sipping a Whiskey, I flipped through a volume on the history of the Western by a 20-Watt bulb. Inevitably, during my journey I went to the WC. I had taken my Walkman and, Working overtime, even Wagner's Walkyrie, a computer to surf the World Wide Web, Works on the photographers Weegee and William Wegman, and writings by Walt Whitman.

W

W, w [dublɔv] nm W, w.
wagon [vɑ̃ʒɔ̃] nm (de train de voyageurs) carriage, Br coach, Am car; (de train de marchandises) Br wagon, Br truck, Am freight car. **wagon-lit** nm (pl wagons-lits) sleeping car, sleeper. **wagon-restaurant** nm (pl wagons-restaurants) dining or restaurant car, diner. **wagonnet** nm Br (small) truck, Am (small) freight car.
walloon, -onne [walɔ̃, -on] a Walloon f nmf W., Wallonne Walloon

walkman® [wɔ̃kmɑ̃] nm Walkman®, (personal) stereo.
waters [wɔ̃tɛr] nmpl Br toilet, Am men's or ladies' room.
watt [wat] nm t-l watt.
w-c [(dubl)vesɛ] nmpl Br toilet, Am men's or ladies' room.
week-end [wikɛ̃d] nm weekend.
western [westɛrɔ̃] nm (film) western.
whisky, pl -ies [wiski] nm Br whisky, Am whiskey.



II *The life of Sophie and how Maria. The rituals that Anne me to shape Maria are The To Follow,..., Suite vénitienne The Address Book, and The Leviathan gives me the opportunity of artistic projects that inspire Maria and I now share.*

I saw him for the first time in December 1985. But one thing bothered me: he was wearing an old brown tie. Later, I saw him in a restaurant with his shirt. It was then that I decided to tell I would send him one article of clothing ever

contacts), but as time went on I understood that she was merely eccentric, an unorthodox person who lived her life according to an elaborate set of bizarre, private rituals. Every experience was systematized for her, a self-contained adventure that generated its own risks and limitations, and each one of her projects fell into a different category, separate from all the others. In my case, I belonged to the category of sex. She appointed me as her bed partner on that first night, and that was the function I continued to serve until the end. In the universe of Maria's compulsions, I was just one ritual among many, but I was fond of the role she had picked for me, and I never found any reason to complain.

Maria was an artist, but the work she did had nothing to do with creating objects commonly defined as art. Some people called her a photographer, others referred to her as a conceptualist, still others considered her a writer, but none of these descriptions was accurate, and in the end I don't think she can be pigeonholed in any way. Her work was too nutty for that, too idiosyncratic, too personal to be thought of as belonging to any particular medium or discipline. Ideas would take hold of her, she would work on projects, there would be concrete results that could be shown in galleries, but this activity didn't stem from a desire to make art so much as from a need to indulge her obsessions, to live her life precisely as she wanted to live it. Living always came first, and a number of her most time-consuming projects were done strictly for herself and never shown to anyone.

Since the age of fourteen, she had saved all the birthday presents that had ever been given to her – still wrapped, neatly arranged on shelves according to the year. As an adult, she held an annual birthday dinner in her own honor, always inviting the same number of guests as her age. Some weeks, she would indulge in what she called 'the chromatic diet,' restricting herself to foods of a single color on any given day. Monday orange: carrots, cantaloupe, boiled shrimp. Tuesday red: tomatoes, persimmons, steak tartare. Wednesday white: flounder, potatoes, cottage cheese. Thursday green: cucumbers, broccoli, spinach –

lecture he was giving. I found him attractive.
tie. The next day I anonymously sent him a
he was wearing it. Unfortunately, it clashed
the task of dressing him from head to toe:
it at Christmas.

and so on, all the way through the last meal on Sunday. At other times, she would make similar divisions based on the letters of the alphabet. Whole days would be spent under the spell of b, c, or w, and then, just as suddenly as she had started it, she would abandon the game and go on to something else. These were no more than whims, I suppose, tiny experiments with the idea of classification and habit, but similar games were just as likely to go on for many years. There was the long-term project of dressing Mr L., for example, a stranger she had once met at a party. Maria found him to be one of the handsomest men she had ever seen, but his clothes were a disgrace, she thought, and so without announcing her intentions to anyone, she took it upon herself to improve his wardrobe. Every year at Christmas she would send him an anonymous gift – a tie, a sweater, an elegant shirt – and because Mr L. moved in roughly the same social circles that she did, she would run into him every now and again, noting with pleasure the dramatic changes in his sartorial appearance. For the fact was that Mr L. always wore the clothes that Maria sent him. She would even go up to him at these gatherings and compliment him on what he was wearing, but that was as far as it went, and he never caught on that she was the one responsible for those Christmas packages.

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In 1986, he received a pair of silk gray socks.



In 1987, a black alpaca sweater. In 1988, a white shirt.





In 1989, a pair of gold-plated cufflinks.



In 1990, a pair of boxer shorts with a Christmas-tree pattern.



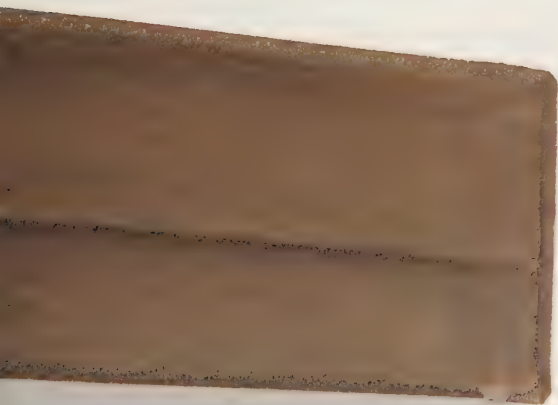
Nothing in 1991, and in 1992, a pair of gray trousers.

Some day, when he is fully dressed
by me, I would like to be introduced
to him.





That at least was my resolution
But, in 1993, when it came to
his shoes, I was far from France
The distance, a botched enquiry,
and my consequent fear of
making a tragic mistake over his
size overcame my professional
conscientiousness. The outfit has
remained incomplete: my man
has no coat and goes barefoot



I was six. I lived on a street named Rosa Bonheur, mere eye-seeing to madness completely in the night. I would arrive without a stitch on. Then I was and as soon as I reached the apartment, I'm myself repeating this ritual every night in put line the boulevard in Pigalle, wearing a blonde neighborhood, should happen to pass by.

on a trip to New Orleans with his girlfriend. Maria would go there as well, she decided, and follow him around with her camera for the entire length of his visit. She had absolutely no interest in him, and the last thing she was looking for was an amorous adventure. Her intention was to keep herself hidden, to resist all contact with him, to explore his outward behavior and make no effort to interpret what she saw. The next morning, she caught a flight from LaGuardia to New Orleans, checked into a hotel, and bought herself a black wig. For three days she made inquiries at dozens of hotels, trying to track down the man's whereabouts. She discovered him at last, and for the rest of the week she walked behind him like a shadow, taking hundreds of photographs, documenting every place he went to. She kept a written diary as well, and when the time came for him to go back to New York, she returned on an earlier flight – in order to be waiting at the airport for a last sequence of pictures as he stepped off the plane. It was a complex and disturbing experience for her, and it left her feeling that she had abandoned her life for a kind of nothingness, as though she had been taking pictures of things that weren't there. The camera was no longer an instrument that recorded presences, it was a way of making the world disappear, a technique for encountering the invisible. Desperate to undo the process she had set in motion, Maria launched into a new project just days after returning to New York. Walking through Times Square with her camera one afternoon, she got into a conversation with the doorman of a topless go-go bar. The weather was warm, and Maria was dressed in shorts and a T-shirt, an unusually skimpy outfit for her. But she had gone out that day in order to be noticed. She wanted to affirm the reality of her body, to make heads turn, to prove to herself that she still existed in the eyes of others. Maria was well put together, with long legs and attractive breasts, and the whistles and lewd remarks she received that day helped to revive her spirits. The doorman told her that she was a pretty girl, just as pretty as the girls inside, and as their conversation continued, she suddenly found herself being offered a job. One of the dancers had called in sick, he said,

all my grandparents. A daily ritual obliged
waiter on my way up to the sixth floor, where
lashed down the corridor at lightning speed.
beat. Twenty years later, in 1979, I found
in the space of one of the strip joint's dan
in case my grandparents, who lived in the

and if she wanted to fill in for her, he'd introduce her to the boss
and see if something couldn't be worked out. Scarcely pausing to
think about it, Maria accepted. That was how her next work came
into being, a piece that eventually came to be known as *The Naked
Lady*. Maria asked a friend to come along that night and take
pictures of her as she performed – not to show anyone, but for
herself, in order to satisfy her own curiosity about what she
looked like. She was consciously turning herself into an object, a
nameless figure of desire, and it was crucial to her that she
understand precisely what that object was. She only did it that
once, working in twenty-minute shifts from eight o'clock in the
evening until two in the morning, but she didn't hold back, and
the whole time she was on stage, perched behind the bar with
colored strobe lights bouncing off her bare skin, she danced her
heart out. Dressed in a rhinestone G-string and a pair of two-inch
heels, she shook her body to loud rock and roll and watched the
men stare at her. She wiggled her ass at them, she ran her tongue
over her lips, she winked seductively as they slipped her dollar
bills and urged her on. As with everything else she tried, Maria
was good at it. Once she got herself going, there was hardly any
stopping her.

As far as I know, she went too far only once. That was in the
spring of 1976, and the ultimate effects of her miscalculation
proved to be catastrophic. At least two lives were lost, and even
though it took years for that to happen, the connection between
the past and the present is inescapable. Maria was the link
between Sachs and Lillian Stern, and if not for Maria's habit of
courting trouble in whatever form she could find it, Lillian Stern
never would have entered the picture. After Maria turned up at
Sachs's apartment in 1979, a meeting between Sachs and Lillian
Stern became possible. It took several more unlikely twists before
that possibility was realized, but each of them can be traced
directly back to Maria. Long before any of us knew her, she went
out one morning to buy film for her camera, saw a little black
address book lying on the ground, and picked it up. That was the
event that started the whole miserable story. Maria opened the













































On January 8, 1981, as I was sitting on the only chair in the trailer, one of my colleagues, to whom I refused to give my seat, tried to poke out my eyes with her high heel and ended up kicking me in the head. I lost consciousness. During the fight, she had, as the ultimate stage of stripping, torn off my blonde wig. This was to be my last performance in the profession.

For months in 1979 I followed strangers on the street because they particularly interested me. I took note of their movements, then finally I

beyond that she was free to do whatever she wanted. Doggedly and dispassionately, never questioning the absurdity of her task, Maria stuck it out to the end. She was just nineteen when she started, a young girl entirely on her own, and yet she managed to fend for herself and avoid major catastrophes, living the sort of adventure that boys her age only dream of. At one point in her travels, a co-worker gave her an old thirty-five millimeter camera, and without any prior training or experience, she began taking photographs. When she saw her father in Chicago a few months after that, she told him that she had finally found something she liked doing. She showed him some of her photographs, and on the strength of those early attempts, he offered to make a bargain with her. If she went on taking photographs, he said, he would cover her expenses until she was in a position to support herself. It didn't matter how long it took, but she wasn't allowed to quit. That was the story she told me in any case, and I never had grounds to disbelieve it. All during the years of our affair, a deposit of one thousand dollars showed up in Maria's account on the first of every month, wired directly from a bank in Chicago.

She returned to New York, sold her van, and moved into the loft on Duane Street, a large empty room located on the floor above a wholesale egg and butter business. The first months were lonely and disorienting for her. She had no friends, no life to speak of, and the city seemed menacing and unfamiliar, as if she had never been there before. Without any conscious motives, she began following strangers around the streets, choosing someone at random when she left her house in the morning and allowing that choice to determine where she went for the rest of the day. It became a method of acquiring new thoughts, of filling up the emptiness that seemed to have engulfed her. Eventually, she began going out with her camera and taking pictures of the people she followed. When she returned home in the evening, she would sit down and write about where she had been and what she had done, using the strangers' itineraries to speculate about their lives and, in some cases, to compose brief, imaginary biographies. That was more or less how Maria stumbled into her

feet—for the pleasure of following them, photographed them without their knowledge, left of them and forgot them.

career as an artist. Other works followed, all of them driven by the same spirit of investigation, the same passion for taking risks. Her subject was the eye, the drama of watching and being watched, and her pieces exhibited the same qualities one found in Maria herself: meticulous attention to detail, a reliance on arbitrary structures, patience bordering on the unendurable. In one work, she hired a private detective to follow her around the city. For several days, this man took pictures of her as she went about her rounds, recording her movements in a small notebook, omitting nothing from the account, not even the most banal and transitory events: crossing the street, buying a newspaper, stopping for a cup of coffee. It was a completely artificial exercise, and yet Maria found it thrilling that anyone should take such an active interest in her. Microscopic actions became fraught with new meaning, the driest routines were charged with uncommon emotion. After several hours, she grew so attached to the detective that she almost forgot she was paying him. When he handed in his report at the end of the week and she studied the photographs of herself and read the exhaustive chronologies of her movements, she felt as if she had become a stranger, as if she had been turned into an imaginary being.

For her next project, Maria took a temporary job as a chambermaid in a large midtown hotel. The point was to gather information about the guests, but not in any intrusive or compromising way. She intentionally avoided them in fact, restricting herself to what could be learned from the objects scattered about their rooms. Again she took photographs; again she invented life stories for them based on the evidence that was available to her. It was an archeology of the present, so to speak, an attempt to reconstitute the essence of something from only the barest fragments: a ticket stub, a torn stocking, a blood stain on the collar of a shirt. Some time after that, a man tried to pick up Maria on the street. She found him distinctly unattractive and rebuffed him. That same evening, by pure coincidence, she ran into him at a gallery opening in SoHo. They talked once again, and this time she learned from the man that he was leaving the next morning



fig 1

fig 2

fig 3



fig 4

5

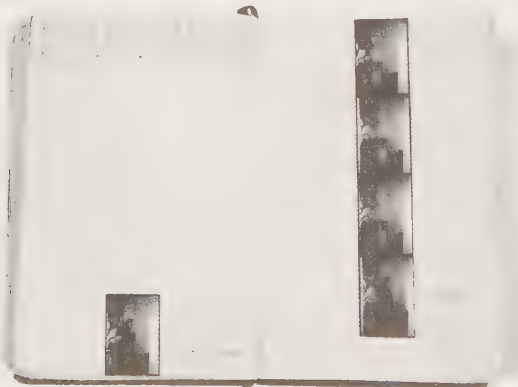
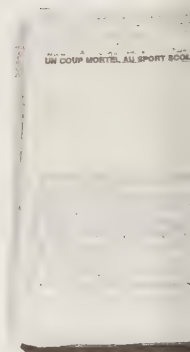
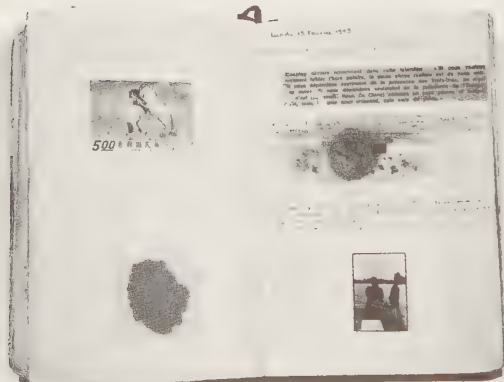
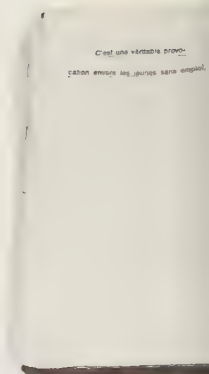
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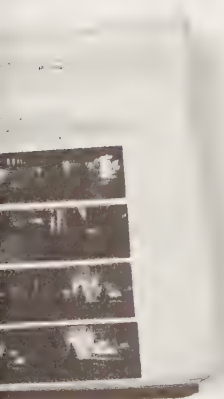
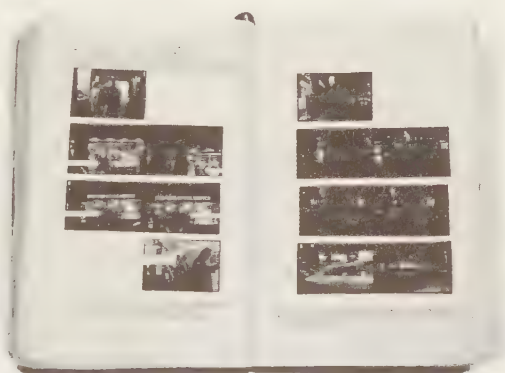
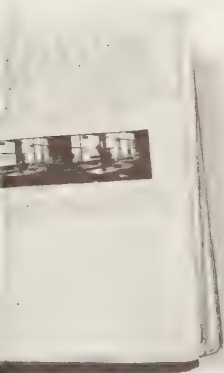
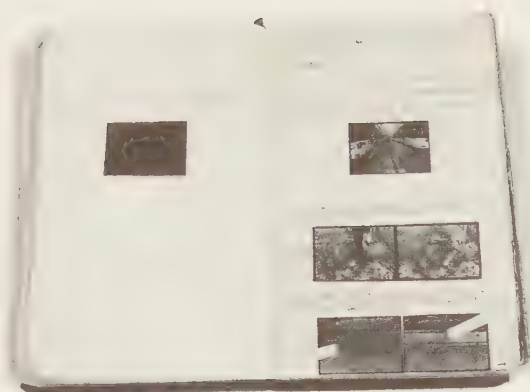
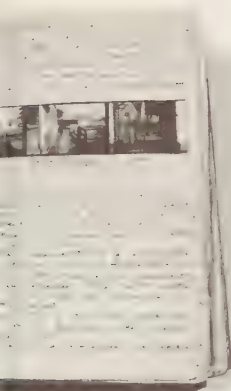
Je suis ensuite, depuis le 43 de la rue Daguerre
une femme avec un cabas et un bouquet de laurier.
Je la choisis parce qu'elle se retourne sans cesse
et qu'elle aot peruvadee d'être minie.
Au coin de l'avenue du général Leclerc, elle
port un miroir de sa poche, s'arrête et
regarde à l'envers du miroir ce qui se
passe autour d'elle -

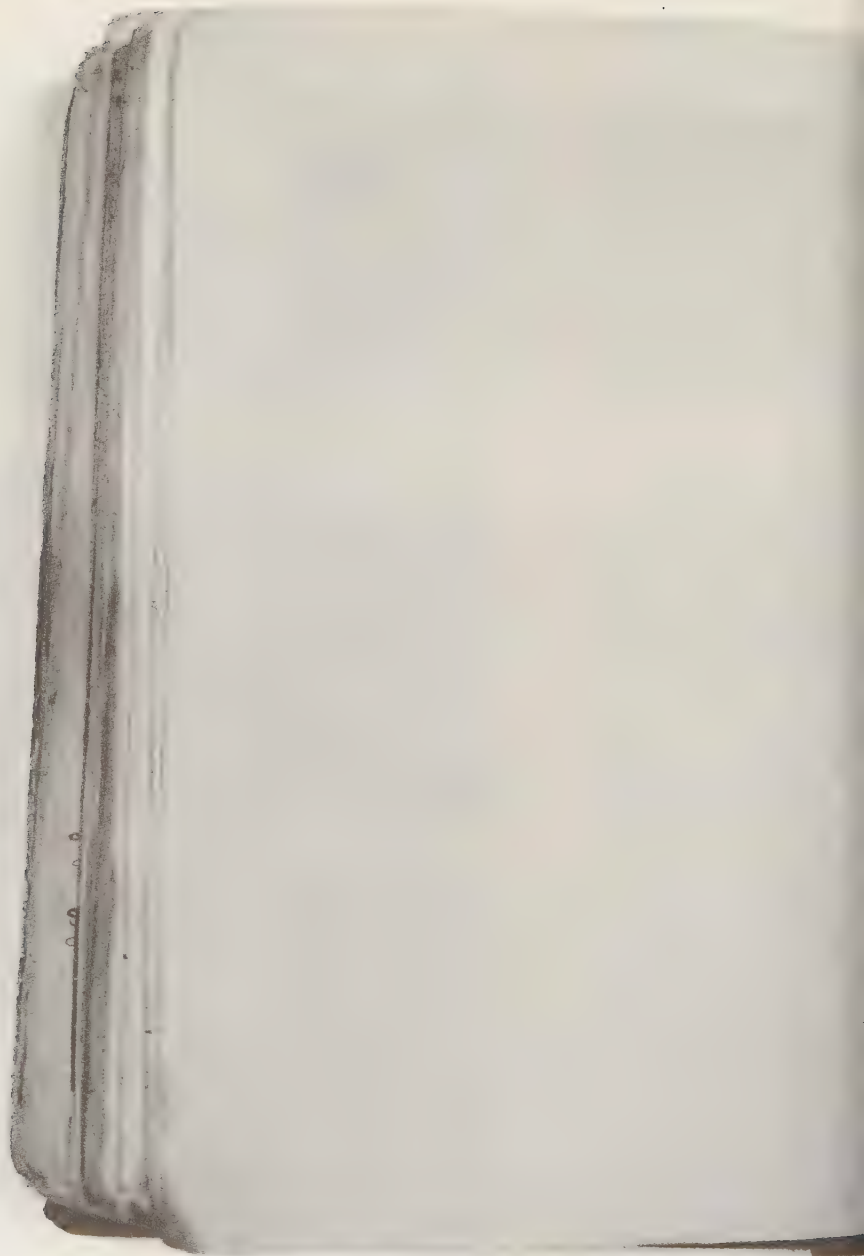


elle marche extrêmement doucement
s'arrête et se retourne souvent.
elle rentre dans la bouche de Netus "DÉNFERT"
là elle attend longuement devant le appareil.
Je fais semblant de consulter le plan
elle ne regarde en l'air après 10 minutes
elle jette un dernier coup d'œil et passe
rapidement sans payer en utilisant la
porte de sortie. moi, je mets un ticket et je
la suis - du bout du quoi elle m'observe.
Je mets arrive, Je m'assois derrière elle -
(cf. Figure 1.2.)

à la station St Sulpice elle descend - (fig. 3.6)
dehors, au carrefour elle se plante en face
de moi et ne me quitte plus des yeux.







DERNIERE HEURE

de chaîner partout à la fois, une campagne
ouverte, officielle, retentissante.

louer des meneurs qui engageraient eux-mêmes
des suivis.

At the end of January 1981, on the streets of a few minutes later in the crowd. That very day was the day of an opening. During the course of an imminent trip to Venice, I decided to follow

beyond that she was free to do whatever she wanted. Doggedly and dispassionately, never questioning the absurdity of her task, Maria stuck it out to the end. She was just nineteen when she started, a young girl entirely on her own, and yet she managed to fend for herself and avoid major catastrophes, living the sort of adventure that boys her age only dream of. At one point in her travels, a co-worker gave her an old thirty-five millimeter camera, and without any prior training or experience, she began taking photographs. When she saw her father in Chicago a few months after that, she told him that she had finally found something she liked doing. She showed him some of her photographs, and on the strength of those early attempts, he offered to make a bargain with her. If she went on taking photographs, he said, he would cover her expenses until she was in a position to support herself. It didn't matter how long it took, but she wasn't allowed to quit. That was the story she told me in any case, and I never had grounds to disbelieve it. All during the years of our affair, a deposit of one thousand dollars showed up in Maria's account on the first of every month, wired directly from a bank in Chicago.

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ried I followed a man whom I lost sight of
ing, quite by chance, he was introduced
versation, he told me he was planning
m.

on a trip to New Orleans with his girlfriend. Maria would go there as well, she decided, and follow him around with her camera for the entire length of his visit. She had absolutely no interest in him, and the last thing she was looking for was an amorous adventure. Her intention was to keep herself hidden, to resist all contact with him, to explore his outward behavior and make no effort to interpret what she saw. The next morning, she caught a flight from LaGuardia to New Orleans, checked into a hotel, and bought herself a black wig. For three days she made inquiries at dozens of hotels, trying to track down the man's whereabouts. She discovered him at last, and for the rest of the week she walked behind him like a shadow, taking hundreds of photographs, documenting every place he went to. She kept a written diary as well, and when the time came for him to go back to New York, she returned on an earlier flight - in order to be waiting at the airport for a last sequence of pictures as he stepped off the plane. It was a complex and disturbing experience for her, and it left her feeling that she had abandoned her life for a kind of nothingness, as though she had been taking pictures of things that weren't there. The camera was no longer an instrument that recorded presences, it was a way of making the world disappear, a technique for encountering the invisible. Desperate to undo the process she had set in motion, Maria launched into a new project just days after returning to New York. Walking through Times Square with her camera one afternoon, she got into a conversation with the doorman of a topless go-go bar. The weather was warm, and Maria was dressed in shorts and a T-shirt, an unusually skimpy outfit for her. But she had gone out that day in order to be noticed. She wanted to affirm the reality of her body, to make heads turn, to prove to herself that she still existed in the eyes of others. Maria was well put together, with long legs and attractive breasts, and the whistles and lewd remarks she received that day helped to revive her spirits. The doorman told her that she was a pretty girl, just as pretty as the girls inside, and as their conversation continued, she suddenly found herself being offered a job. One of the dancers had called in sick, he said,

and if she wanted to fill in for her, he'd introduce her to the boss and see if something couldn't be worked out. Scarcely pausing to think about it, Maria accepted. That was how her next work came into being, a piece that eventually came to be known as *The Naked Lady*. Maria asked a friend to come along that night and take pictures of her as she performed - not to show anyone, but for herself, in order to satisfy her own curiosity about what she looked like. She was consciously turning herself into an object, a nameless figure of desire, and it was crucial to her that she understand precisely what that object was. She only did it that once, working in twenty-minute shifts from eight o'clock in the evening until two in the morning, but she didn't hold back, and the whole time she was on stage, perched behind the bar with colored strobe lights bouncing off her bare skin, she danced her heart out. Dressed in a rhinestone G-string and a pair of two-inch heels, she shook her body to loud rock and roll and watched the men stare at her. She wiggled her ass at them, she ran her tongue over her lips, she winked seductively as they slipped her dollar bills and urged her on. As with everything else she tried, Maria was good at it. Once she got herself going, there was hardly any stopping her.

As far as I know, she went too far only once. That was in the spring of 1976, and the ultimate effects of her miscalculation proved to be catastrophic. At least two lives were lost, and even though it took years for that to happen, the connection between the past and the present is inescapable. Maria was the link between Sachs and Lillian Stern, and if not for Maria's habit of courting trouble in whatever form she could find it, Lillian Stern never would have entered the picture. After Maria turned up at Sachs's apartment in 1979, a meeting between Sachs and Lillian Stern became possible. It took several more unlikely twists before that possibility was realized, but each of them can be traced directly back to Maria. Long before any of us knew her, she went out one morning to buy film for her cameras, saw a little black address book lying on the ground, and picked it up. That was the event that started the whole miserable story. Maria opened the





Monday, February 11, 1980, 10 P.M.

Gare de Lyon. Platform H
Venice boarding area. My father
accompanies me to the platform
He waves his hand

In my suitcase: a make-up kit
so I can disguise myself; a blonde,
bobbed wig; hats; veils; gloves;
sunglasses; a Leica and a Squintar
(a lens attachment equipped
with a set of mirrors so I can
take photos without aiming at
the subject)

I photograph the occupants
of the other berths and then go
to sleep

*Tomorrow I will see Venice for
the first time*



Tuesday, February 12, 12:52 P.M.

Arrival at the Venice train station. The pensione recommended to me is the Locanda Montin, near the Accademia. I go there

*I didn't bother to put on my wig,
I'm not made up. I don't have a
strong enough feeling that Henri B
is in this city*

1:35 P.M. I am given room number 1

3 P.M. I walk the streets randomly. In the course of our conversation about Venice, Henri B had alluded to a pensione: the San Bernardino. On the list of hotels that I obtained *en route*, I don't find a San Bernardino. *That doesn't surprise me.* There is a San Giorgio, a San Stetano

I arrive at Piazza San Marco and sit against a column. I watch

*I see myself at the labyrinth's gate,
ready to get lost in the city and in this
story. Submissive*

8 P.M. I return to the Locanda Montin and dine alone at the restaurant on the ground floor. Then I go to bed

Wednesday, February 13, 11 A.M.

I wear a beige raincoat, a scarf, and dark glasses. I go to the Questura, the main police station. After a series of corridors, I enter the office where the hotel registration forms are kept. I explain to the clerk that I've lost the name and address of the hotel where a friend of mine is staying. I confess my helplessness. The clerk says he can't help me: it's against policy to supply such information to the public. He advises me to go to the reservation desk at the train station. *Why don't I have the audacity to bribe him?*

12:30 P.M. The train station. The same refusal. I am directed again to the Questura.

1:30 P.M. Piazza San Marco. I wait for hours, sitting on a bench at Palazzo Ducale, hidden

by a column. I watch for his silhouette. A young man accompanied by a dog notices me and speaks to me. His name is Pino; hers is Cioccolata.

Pino is Venetian; he draws caricatures to sell to tourists. Last year he sat perched for two days on the edge of the bell tower of Piazza San Marco.

We go for a walk. He waves to all of the policemen we meet. He states that he knows the police chief's daughter intimately.

I tell him I've lost track of a friend. He says he'll help me find him. Touched by my apparent shyness and the innumerable blunders that I commit in his language, Pino agrees to call certain hotels for me to see if Henri B by chance is registered at one. From my list I choose the

hotel names most like San Bernardino.

There is no Henri B at the San Giorgio or at the San Stefano. The San Bartolomeo is closed.

I know neither Henri B's tastes nor his means; I'll call the hotels of Venice, one by one, without exception.

I thank Pino. We may see each other again tomorrow. I go back to the Locanda Montin and dine alone.

9 P.M. This evening is my first night out as a blonde. A man follows me for about ten minutes but doesn't dare to approach me.

I slip through the streets. A dread is taking hold of me: He recognized me, he's following me, he knows.

I go to Harry's Bar. I drink a whiskey and at 11 P.M. I return to the pensione.

Thursday, February 14, noon

Lunch with Anna Lisa G and Luciana C, Venetians a mutual friend suggested I contact. I confide in them the purpose of my trip. They're willing to help and place their telephone at my disposal.

3 P.M. I leave them. I put on the wig; from now on I won't go out without wearing it. I continue my search for Henri B on the streets. *I wonder if he's rich.* I go into the luxury hotels: "Do you have a

guest named Henri B?" At the Savoia, the Cavaletto, the Londra, the Danieli, the San Marco, the answer is no.

I know so little about him, except that he had rain and fog for the first days, that he now has sun, that he is never where I search. He is consuming me.

Four hours pass. I give up.

8 P.M. Dinner with Luciana C at the restaurant Le Miliòn. For practice, while aiming at my

friend, I photograph three men on my right with the Squintar.

The day Henri B is there in front of me, will I be able to photograph him, as well, while looking elsewhere? I doubt it.

Midnight. I reach the pensione. I've been reciting his name since the Ponte dell'Accademia. I remove my wig.

Today, for the first time in my life, someone called me a "good-looking blonde".







Friday, February 15, 10 A.M.

I leave the Locanda Montin as a brunette and don my wig in a tiny alleyway near by. *I'll do it this way every day. I don't want to baffle the proprietors. They are already calling me Sophie.*

I inquire about Henri B in all the hotels having a first name for a name: Da Bruno, the Leonardo, the San Moise, the Alex ... at lunch time, I look through restaurant windows. *I always see the same faces, never his. I've come to find some consolation in knowing he's not where I am looking for him. I know where Henri B is not.*

For a few moments, I take a different tack and absent-mindedly follow a flower delivery boy—as if he might lead me to him.

2 P.M. I settle down in front of the telephone at Anna Lisa G's place. The Venice hotel list, not including the Lido, comprises 181 names divided into several categories: deluxe, first, second, third, and fourth classes; first-, second-, and third-class pensiones; and inns. I will call them all in their respective order.

Thus I dial the numbers for the hotels Bauer Grünwald, Cipriani, Gritti, Carlton Executive, Europa e Britannia, Gabrielli, Londra, Luna, Metropole, Monaco e Grand Canal, Park Hotel, Regina e Di Roma Vittoria, Saturnia e International, Ala, All'Angelo, Al Sole Palace, Austria, Bel Sito, Bisanzio, Bonvecchiati, Boston, Capri, Carpaccio, Casanova, Cavalerio, Concordia, Continental, Corso, De L'Albore, Do Pozzi,

Flora, Giorgione, La Fenice, Monte-carlo, Partia-Tze Rose, Principe, Residence Palance, San Marco, Terminus, Torino, Union, Universo, Adriatico, Alla Fava, Antico Panada, Astoria, Ateneo, Atlantide, Basilea, Canal, Caprera, Casa Igea, Castello, Centauro, Città di Milano, Diana, Dolomiti, Firenze, Florida, Gallini, Gardena, Gorizia, Grasso de Ua, Kette, Lisbona, Lux, Malibran, Marconi, Mignon, Nazionale, Noemi, Olimpia, Paganelli, Pausania-San Barnaba, Pellegrino e Commercio, Piazzale Roma, Rialto, San Fantin, San Gallo, San Maurizio, Santa Chiara, Scandinavia, Serenissima, Spagna, Stella Alpina, Trovatore, Walter, Zecchini, Al Gobbo, Atlantico, Basilea, Brooklyn, Caneva, Casa Boccassini, Da Nino, Falier, Guerrato, Guerrini, Hesperia, Ida, Iris, Marin, Marte, Mercurio, Minerva e Nettuno, Moderno, Orion, Rio, San Cassiano, San Geremia, San Lio, Santa Lucia, Tivoli, Villa Rosa, Locanda Cipriani, Accademia, Ca'd'Oro, La Calcina, Seguso, Agli Alboretti, Al Gazzettino, Alla Salute Da Cici, Bucintoro, Campiello.

At 6:45 P.M. I dial the number for the Casa de Stefani, a third-class pensione, and ask for the 125th time to speak with Mr Henri B. A man tells me that he's out for the day.

He adds, "They leave early each morning and come back

late in the evening." I thank him and hang up.

The Casa de Stefani is located at 2786 Calle del Tragheto, or, approximately, 100 meters from the pensione where I am staying.

7:15 P.M. In the company of Luciana C, I take the vaporetto. We get off at the Ca'Rezzonico. Ahead of us, the narrow, somber Calle del Tragheto leads to the Campo San Barnaba. Halfway down the street, on the left, is the Casa de Stefani. I scarcely dare to glance at the closed door and pass by without slowing down. *My investigation was proceeding without him. Finding him may throw everything into confusion, may precipitate the end. I'm afraid.*

As we agreed upon in advance, Luciana C, keeping several meters behind me, goes to ring the bell at the pensione. She's supposed to ask the price of the rooms and describe the place to me. I plan to have my friend stay at the Casa de Stefani. Soon she rejoins me. It is a woman who opened the door. The entryway is spacious, dark. The price for a single room is 7 000 lire per day, 14 000 lire for a double. The pensione is full until Sunday.

We cover the short distance back to the Locanda Montin. *The closeness doesn't surprise me. Along the way I take off my wig.*

We go for dinner. At 10 P.M., and again at midnight, I pass by the front of his pensione alone. Furtively.



Saturday, February 16, 8 A.M.



Calle del Traghetto. I am waiting for him. The street is closed-in, narrow, about 100 meters in length, running from Campo San Barnaba to the dock. It's used only by its inhabitants and vaporetto passengers. Every five minutes, when a boat arrives, a wave of people streams over the deserted street.

If Henri B leaves the pensione when the street is empty, he won't escape me. But if he goes out at a crowded moment, I run the risk of missing him. One of two things may happen: either he turns left to continue on foot or he goes right to board the boat. Given these alternatives, the only solution is to survey the street ceaselessly, without relaxing my attention. *If he should see me . . .*

11:10 A.M. After three hours of continuous comings and goings, I think I catch a glimpse of him. I start. It's not him.

11:30 A.M. The door to his pensione opens at the precise moment I pass by. A woman exits. I can make out a dark

hallway, a kneeling silhouette washing the floor.

11:40 A.M. I sit for a moment on a step. I'm wearing my dark glasses and a hat; my face is hidden by a newspaper that I pretend to scan.

11:50 A.M. To disguise my intentions, I wait in front of 2788 Calle del Traghetto, as if the door were going to open for me.

11:55 A.M. I am losing patience. *I refuse to think about my being in this place. I must not think about it. I must stop pondering possible outcomes, wondering where this story is leading me. I will follow it to the end.*

A couple, about thirty years old, leaves the house across the street from the Casa de Stefani. If they would let me use a window looking out onto the street, my wait would be a bit more comfortable. I follow them and take the vaporetto with them. We get off at the San Marco stop. I don't dare approach them. I let them go.

12:30 P.M. I take a walk along the beach of the Lido.

I dream about him and that phrase by Proust: "To think that I've wasted years of my life, that I wanted to die and that I had my greatest love for a woman whom I did not care for, who was not my type."

I must not forget that I don't have any amorous feelings toward Henri B. The impatience with which I await his arrival, the fear of that encounter, these symptoms aren't really a part of me.

4 P.M. I settle in on my bench at Piazza San Marco. Venice is preparing for the carnival. Children are already in costume. I watch at length a little boy with a feathered headdress who's tirelessly chasing pigeons with a knife. *I would like to see him kill one.*

8 P.M. *He's not coming.* I get up from my bench. I have a date with Luciana C at the masquerade ball at the Arsenal. I photograph the mayor of Venice, who smiles at me.

10 P.M. I go back to my pensione. On the way I take off my wig. I meet the man who had followed me as a blonde. He doesn't pay any attention to me now.

Sunday, February 17, 8 A.M.



Calle del Traghetto. I wait as I did yesterday. It's Sunday; there are fewer people. It's cold. I resume my comings and goings.

10 A.M. I take a break for a cup of coffee at the Bar Artista, at the corner of his street and Campo San Barnaba. The arrival of the owner of Locanda Montin takes me by surprise. Would he recognize me beneath my wig? I lower my head, hand a bill to the waiter,

and leave quickly. From now on I'll pay for my meals when I order.

I return to Calle del Traghetto *I seek out a certain profile. I am blind to all else*

Noon. I give up. I go to Piazza San Marco. I have a drink at the Café Florian, where I meet lean, the barman. He explains to me why Europe is the most beautiful of continents, Italy the most beautiful country in Europe, Venice the most beautiful city in Italy, San Marco the most beautiful piazza in Venice, the Florian the most beautiful café on Piazza San Marco, and that he, lean, is the barman at the Florian. He invites me to lunch and I accept

2 P.M. We go to La Madonna restaurant. I tell lean that I am looking for a friend vacationing in Venice, that I'd like to surprise him. I show him a photograph of Henri B that I took on the streets of Paris. Jean promises to let me know if he notices this man; he will call me if necessary. We part.

3:30 P.M. I decide to go back to Casa de Stefani. *At this time of the day he's surely not there.*

3:40 P.M. I ring. A young man invites me in, then asks me to wait. He leaves. The lobby is deep and dark. On the left a wide stairway leads to the rooms. The place is gloomy. A woman, about forty years old, approaches me. I inquire as to the price of the rooms, then ask if there are certain hours to respect. She answers that guests have a key to the front door so that they can come and go as they please. I thank her.

4 P.M. Back at Locanda Montin, it appears to me that G, the owner, is staring at me curiously; would he have recognized me this morning? I decide to talk to him: *I need allies.* I address him like this: "I'm looking for a man. I want to know what he's doing in

Venice, and I don't want him to know I'm in the city. His name is Henri B and he's staying at Casa de Stefani. Could you help me?"

G says that he has a friend working at that pensione and offers to call him right away. I accept. *G didn't ask me anything. Not a single detail.* He dials the telephone number and, after identifying himself, asks his friend if there might be a guest at Casa de Stefani by the name of Henri B. The answer is positive. G asks his friend to tell him about Henri B. The man complies willingly: "Henri B is a charming person. He arrived in the company of a young boy, who left after several days. Then his wife joined him. Recently they traveled out of Venice. They're now back. [The man specifies neither their destination nor how long they were gone.] He photographed the pensione, the owners. He goes out in the morning around 10 or 10:30 and doesn't come back until late in the evening. His room is reserved until next week."

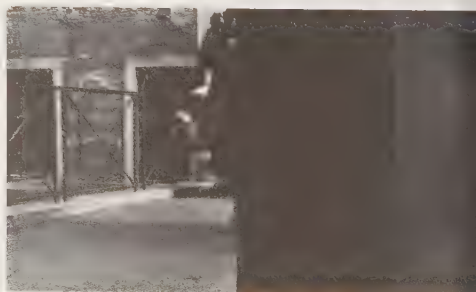
Fear seizes me once again at such a specific depiction of Henri B's habits. I'm afraid of meeting up with him: I'm afraid that the encounter might be commonplace. I don't want to be disappointed. There is such a gap between his thoughts and mine. I'm the only one dreaming. Henri B's feelings do not belong in my story.

G hangs up. He thinks his friend was not surprised by the request, and he implicitly promised to keep silent. *Their kindness touches me.* I thank G. *This morning he had not recognized me.*

In the evening I mechanically return to the front of his pensione. On the second floor a window is lit. I press myself momentarily against the door



Monday, February 18, 8 A.M.



Calle del Traghetto. It's freezing out. I patiently resume my comings and goings

10:05 A.M. At last, it's him I was pretending to be waiting for someone else at the entryway of a house located between his pensione and the canal. The door of Casa de Stefani opened. He appeared.

He heads toward Campo San Barnaba. He's wearing a wool-lined sheepskin coat and has a camera slung over his shoulder. I find him changed. His hair is longer. A woman is holding on to his arm, her head covered by a print shawl. I follow them from a short distance. They take the following route: Calle del

Traghetto, Campo San Barnaba, Ponte dei Pigni, Rio terrà Canal—he asks directions from a passer-by—Campo di Santa Margherita, Ponte San Pantalon, Campiello delle Mosche, Salizzada San Pantalon, Rio del Gattaro, Fondamenta dei Tolentini, Calle delle Chiovere, Campo San Rocco, Calle Larga—they glance into the window of the Fox Photo Shop—Calle Traghetto, Campo San Tomà, Calle dei Nomboli, Rio terrà dei Nomboli, Calle dei Saoneri, Ponte San Polo—Salizzada San Polo, Campo San Polo—he points to the church, takes a picture of the piazza. I imitate him. Sottoportego della Madonnetta,

Calle della Madonnetta, Ponte della Madonnetta—he crouches to snap a shot of the canal, or perhaps of that passing boat? After several seconds, I imitate him, trying my best to take the same pictures—Campiello dei Meloni—they seem interested by a poster advertising photo-copiers—Calle di Mezzo, Campo San Aponal—she enters a bookstore and comes out again immediately, empty-handed—Rughetta del Ravano—he buys a paper, talking briefly with the vendor—Ruga Vecchia San Giovanni—they stop for a few seconds in front of the Banco di Roma and unfold a map which they consult: it's crowded.





Campo San Polo—he points to the church, takes a picture of the piazza. I imitate him.



*Ponte della Madonnetta—he crouches to snap a shot of the canal, or perhaps of that passing boat?
After several seconds, I imitate him, trying my best to take the same picture.*



11:05 A.M. The woman goes inside the Banco di Roma. I guess that he went in before her. To see him, I approach the front windows of the bank. I can just make out the woman on the other side of the glass. I back away.

11:15 A.M. She leaves and heads toward the Ponte di Rialto. She's alone. I rush into the bank. He's not there. I run after the woman. She's disappeared. For the next few minutes, I search for them in all directions in vain.

11:25 A.M. I give up. I lean up against the facade of the Banco di Roma. *I caught a glimpse of one hour in Henri B's life.*

On our first meeting, Henri B had told me that he liked cemeteries. It is the only thing that I had learned about him. In the afternoon I go to the old Jewish cemetery of the Lido. To open its gate, one must first get the key from the caretaker of the main cemetery. Having completed this step, I close the cemetery gate after me.

This is where he should have been. I have high expectations of him.

5:30 P.M. I wait for Luciana C under the clock in Piazza San Marco. Her pace quickens when she sees me. She says she noticed

a man at the Café Florian. She thought he matched my description of Henri B. The man was accompanied by a woman. Luciana C passed close to them. The man looked at her. She's certain it was him.

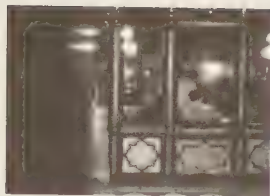
Night falls. I near the lighted windows at the Florian. I pick out Henri B seated in a nook. I photograph the woman sitting next to him, her back to the window. Outside, I wait for him.

6 P.M. He gets up, disappears for two minutes, returns, and pays. They leave the café. Night has fallen. My shadowing continues: Piazza San Marco—they glance at the shop Pauly and C, Venetian glassware Calle dell'Ascension—they look for a while longer at the knickknacks in Bertoli's, then they stop for about three minutes in front of the window at Vogini, shoe and handbag merchant. I turn my back to them and observe their motions through the reflection in the store window on the other side of the street—Calle della Frezzeria, Piscine di Frezzeria an obscure, deserted alley that widens into a small piazza. *We are alone, I'm close to him, he doesn't frighten me.*









At 6:15 P.M. they go into an antique shop, Luigi bottega d'arte, 1656 Piscine di Frezzeria. They go up a stairway and escape my watchful eye.

There is a tiny blind alley in front of the shop. I decide to take up watch on the corner of the alley where it meets the piazza. When they come down the steps, I'll see their legs as they appear and will back up into the darkness.

Once again, I wait.

7 P.M. A stranger passes several times in front of me. I turn my eyes away from him and stare fixedly at the ground. The man enters La Colomba restaurant.

7:30 P.M. It's freezing out. I approach the antique shop. One must ring to enter. Above the door a sign reads, "Show me your home and I'll tell you who you are."

8 P.M. They are still inside; I am outside. I cast aside all caution. I lean against the door. *The absurd length of this visit.* It's as if he were telling me, "You can wait for me, I won't come."

8:10 P.M. The man who had stared at me for a long time leaves La Colomba. He stops and speaks to me; he's surprised

to find me in the same spot, in this cold. He wants to know if he can be of some help.

I tell him I'm in love with a man *only love seems admissible*—and this man has been in Luigi's antique shop since 6:15 in the company of a woman.

I ask him to go join them, alone, and to tell me what he has seen when he comes back. He agrees to do it.

8:15 P.M. He rings the bell at the antique shop. The door opens. He enters, climbing the steps.

8:20 P.M. I'm impatient. *The stranger must have spoken to them.*

8:25 P.M. He comes out. He gives me this account: "The main part of the shop is located on the second floor. The antique dealer, a man, and a woman are seated in comfortable armchairs, a glass of whiskey in hand. It's quite warm in the room. I do not know what they were saying because Luigi, a charming gentleman, interrupted their conversation to wait on me." After a silence, he adds: "It seems they plan on staying there for a while." He asks me if I still wish to wait. I answer yes. I thank him for his help. He seems surprised, but he leaves.



1656

*Vento Mar Ca
je Cerami Que*



I'm cold; the thought that they are warm irritates me. I could leave in an hour maybe, they will go to La Colomba and then return to their room—but I stay. I don't want to have to imagine, to guess

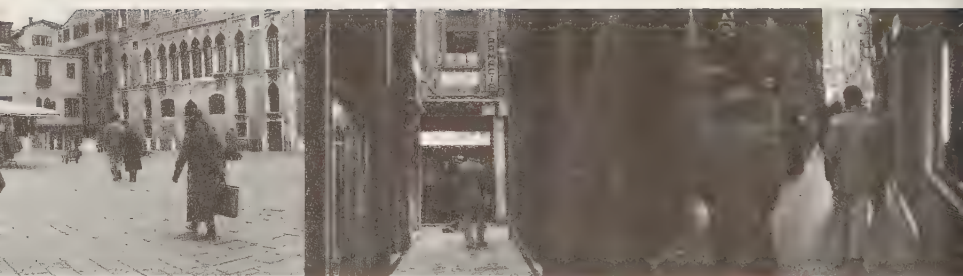
8:45 P.M. Their legs appear on the top steps. I crouch into my hiding place. They go, turning to their left. I wait a few seconds. At the very moment I leave the alley to follow them, they turn around. *She was the first to turn back. She scares me more than he does.* I quickly fall back. They pass by me without turning their heads, tranquil, silent, and heading in the opposite direction along the path taken three hours before. The streets are empty. I follow them from a distance: Calle della Frezzeria, Calle dell'Ascension, then Calle Vallaressa, which leads to vaporetto stop number 15, the San Marco station. They wait for the boat. I pretend to window

shop. Ten minutes go by. The vaporetto docks. I rush to board just in time. They go into the cabin and sit down; I remain on deck. *So close to him, as if sharing an island, encircled by the waters of the lagoon. I feel determined*

As we approach the Accademia stop, they get up and join me outside. I hide my face behind a newspaper, *Il Gazzettino*. They get off the boat. I do the same. They go around the church of Santa Maria della Carità and take the first street on the left. After covering about one hundred meters, they disappear through a door. I approach; it's the Trattoria di Cugnai, 857 Calle nuova ant'Agnese. Through the window I watch them sit down at a table. He gets up almost immediately, crosses the room, and pushes open a door in the back (probably one leading to the toilets)

That's enough for tonight. I go back to my pensione. It's 9:30 P.M.





Tuesday, February 19, 10 A.M.

From the Bar Artisti I watch, turned toward Campo San Barnaba, waiting, without conviction, for him to pass. *I don't make much of an effort, I give myself a break—I have seen him. And the woman who accompanies him disturbs me; last night I had a nightmare: He comes toward me and says, "Listen, that's enough!" Later in the dream, this woman orders him not to go out on the street in order to thwart my investigation. She runs after me, trips, and falls into the Grand Canal. I jump into the dirty water and pull her to dry land. I disappear. She wonders who that blonde woman was who saved her from drowning and then fled without a trace.*

11 A.M. He's not coming. I give up.

11:30 A.M. I ring the bell at Luigi's, the door opens, I climb the steps. In the main room on the second floor, the antique dealer greets me and then leaves almost at once for another customer. While waiting, I look at the objects on display. Ten minutes pass, Luigi returns. I introduce myself and pretend that one of my friends, a certain Henri B, had recommended I pay him a visit. Luigi suggests that I come back next Friday about six o'clock: the boutique will be

closed and we will be able to chat at our leisure.

Perhaps he'll invite me to sit down in his armchair, a glass of whiskey in hand. I will be warm.

I thank him. I will return.

Noon. I have an appointment at the Café Florian with Mr S, a Venetian. We have a mutual friend in Paris.

A man sits alone at the bar. We nod to each other. Mr S is in his fifties and has a handsome face; he smiles. Without hesitation I confide in him. I tell him about my trip, explain the reason for our meeting. I feel alone, I need help, but I don't know what form it might take. He listens to me carefully. He would like to help me, but he doesn't know how.

He tells me about the most popular tourist spots and marks them on my map of Venice. I ask him if he knows anyone on Calle del Traghetto who has a window overlooking the street. Mr S knows that a certain Dr Z lives on that street, but he doesn't know him personally.

At 1 P.M. we part. He asks me to keep in touch with him.

1:30 P.M. In front of the architecture school I meet with Mr C, whose address was given to me by a friend in Paris. He's about thirty-five years old, stylish, and

at ease. He's accompanied by two other professors. The three men take me to lunch at a restaurant close to the school. The conversation is sophisticated, lively.

Venice is a small city; I ask C if he knows a Dr Z who lives on Calle del Traghetto. "We are good, longtime friends," he says.

I express my wish to meet him. C gives me his address and telephone number. He promises to talk to him about me this evening and to tell him I will call.

At 3 P.M. we part company.

I walk randomly through the city's streets looking for Henri B.

This method is basic, easy and relaxing, even if it has proven less than efficient.

3:20 P.M. I see him right in the middle of Campo Sant'Angelo. He turns his back to me and photographs a group of children playing. Quickly, I do the same.

Then I notice the woman, who's waiting for him off to the side. He joins her.

Our journey begins: Campo Sant'Angelo, Calle del Spezier, Ponte della Cortesia—he points toward the canal as if to show something to the woman. I take a picture in the same direction—Campo Manin—their paths separate suddenly: she turns to the left, he to the right—Campo San Luca, Calle delle Balanze,



He turns his back to me and photographs a group of children playing. Quickly, I do the same.

Calle dei Fabbri, Calle del Teatro o della Comedia, Campo San Salvador—he hesitates in front of the Credito Italiano, glances toward the canal, then takes off again—Calle 2 Aprile, Campo San Bartolomeo, Salizzada San Giovanni Grisostomo—he enters the central post office. I follow him. Hidden behind a column, I observe and photograph him in front of the general delivery counter. An employee hands him his mail, it looks like two letters. He goes out—Ponte dell'Olio, Calle del Teatro o dell'Opera—the neighborhood is deserted, his pace slackens, about fifteen meters separate us—Corte 2 del Milion—a dark and nauseating archway that

serves as a garbage dump—Ponte del Teatro o Marco Polo—at the bridge, he stops, photographs the canal or perhaps Marco Polo's house. I stay beneath the archway in semi-obscurity. He's there, motionless, staring fixedly at the water. He's slung his camera back over his shoulder. He leans with his elbows upon the bridge wall, daydreaming.

I'm afraid he'll turn abruptly and see me crouching in the garbage. I decide to pass silently behind him and wait a little farther along. Quickly, with head lowered, I cross the bridge. Henri B doesn't move. *I could touch him.*

The only street facing the bridge is Calle Scaletta, long and

extremely narrow. About twenty meters from the bridge, I slip into a large entryway and wait for him to pass. Five very long minutes go by. Perhaps he's retraced his steps? I regret my impatience. I leave my hiding place and go back.

He's there, in the same place. At the very moment I pass over the bridge, he straightens up. He doesn't seem to have noticed me.

After photographing the canal, the house, places he was staring at, I continue my pursuit. *He's alone, I'm getting too close to him. I am becoming careless.* Calle Scaletta, Campo di Santa Marina, Calle del Cristo, Ponte del Cristo, Fondamenta Van Axel—he approaches a man who is wearing



Ponte Cavallo, Rome. I'm standing at the entrance of the hospital, looking out the front gate. I take a picture in the same direction.

a mask and asks him to pose in front of Palazzo Van Axel. He adjusts the position of the man's arm then takes a photograph. He thanks him and goes on his way. Calle delle Erbe, Ponte Rosso—we end up in a vast piazza, more crowded with people than the empty streets we've just passed through. My fear subsides—Campo dei SS Giovanni e Paolo. In the center, an equestrian monument, at the far side the public hospital. He heads toward the hospital, passing through the front gate.

Several seconds later, I enter an immense hall, empty and silent. Steps resonate. Suddenly, I find myself facing him; he's already heading for the exit.

He crosses my path, brushes by me, stares at me, and leaves. I wait a while before leaving the grounds.

As soon as I'm outside, I see him, sitting at the landing of the Ponte Cavallo, some ten meters to my right. He's looking at me. Concealing my emotions, I determinedly cross the piazza, circle around the monument and pretend to study it. I feel his eyes on me. I walk along the hospital's right wing. There's an alcove. Finally I'll be out of his sight. *I've got to get a hold of myself. I lean against a column and close my eyes.*

His solitude made me audacious. I've diverted him from his course. He's intrigued. I should keep my distance, and yet I stay close.



Perhaps I'm weary of playing this out alone.

I open my eyes; he is in front of me, quite close. We are alone. He doesn't say anything. *He seems to be absorbed in thought—a few seconds' respite—is he trying to remember?*

Then he speaks: "Your eyes, I recognize your eyes; that's what you should have hidden." He backs up to photograph me. He suggests, "Would you like to walk together?" I signal that I would.

5 P.M. We take the Fondamenta dei Mendicanti. It ends up at the docks along the Laguna Morta. In the distance we can make out the San Michele cemetery.

On the way, he asks me what I have seen of Venice. I cannot think of an answer. In the face of my silence, he tries something else: he tells me that I shouldn't have left my ID card in plain sight on the pensione's reception desk. *A childish invention.*

I smile at him. I am relieved that he doesn't say, "If I were you . . ." or, "You should have . . .". I like the awkward way he's hiding his surprise, his desire to be master of the situation. As if, in fact, I had been the unconscious victim of his game, his itineraries, his schedules. I stay silent. He talks to me about the beauty of the city, he wants to know if I saw this church, that museum. I answer only with a yes or a no.

Now he's silent, too. We walk along the lagoon; the neighborhood is deserted. He tells me he has an appointment in about an hour, close to Piazza San

Marco. He suggests we go there together by vaporetto. I accept. *I am at his disposal.*

We climb aboard and sit in the back of the boat, next to one another. Throughout the ride we don't exchange a word. He says nothing more about my ID card; from now on he avoids any allusion to the situation.

I put on some lipstick and adjust the veil on my hat. He turns toward me, compliments me. The boat docks. Preparations are under way for the carnival ball; in a few minutes the first firecrackers will go off. Stands have been erected for the orchestra, a costumed crowd invades Piazza San Marco.

We pass by, still silent.

Am I relieved, disappointed?

We arrive in front of the Café Florian. He says that we must part. I try to photograph him; he holds his hand up to hide his face and cries, "No, that's against the rules."

We simply say goodbye.

I believe he smiles ever so slightly. He walks away under the arcades. I photograph his back and let him go.

What did I imagine? That he was going to take me with him, to challenge me, to use me? Henri B did nothing, I discovered nothing. A banal ending to this banal story.

I return to the carnival. I dance hours on end and spend the night on a bench with a harlequin.

At daybreak, I leave while he sleeps. Nobody is on the streets. Alone, I wander back over the routes we took together these last two days, Henri B and I.





S. MARCO

DI S. MARCO







Wednesday, February 20, 7 A.M.

Locanda Montin. The proprietress scolds me. She tells me she waited for me last night.

10 A.M. Today I will not wait for him on Calle del Traghetto.

I cannot follow him anymore. He must be worried, wondering if I am there, behind him—now he thinks of me—but I will be on his trail. Differently.

He likes cemeteries. I take the vaporetto and go to the Island of the Dead, Venice's main cemetery.

I stand for a long time in front of a burial vault on which a Christmas wreath is hung.

The old caretaker approaches me. He invites me for a drink in his hut, set up right in the middle of the tombstones. As soon as we

enter, he locks the door behind us. I show him a picture of Henri B: has he seen this man before?

He can't recall. We chat. Ten minutes later I ask to leave. He puts away his whiskey bottle and opens the door for me. He smiles and says, "You were scared, no?"

3 P.M. I call Dr Z; he agrees to see me at his home on Calle de Traghetto, at 5 P.M.

5 P.M. I ring at Dr Z's house. He's on the telephone and has me wait a few minutes in his sitting room. The windows all look out onto the street.

He comes back. He must be sixty years old. I like him. I tell him the whole story.

Dr Z agrees to lend me a

window on the second floor, mornings only. He asks in return that I take off my wig for him. I consent. He tells me he prefers me as a brunette.

At 7:30 P.M. I leave. I'll be back tomorrow at 9 A.M. to station myself at his window. *Why this obstinacy, this window now?*

8 P.M. I go to the Trattoria ai Cugnai, where he had dinner two days before. It's a pleasant place, lively, rather modest. The menu is written in four languages. Service is provided by three old women. Englishmen are sitting on my left, Germans on my right. The food is greasy, but the price is right.

10 P.M. I return to Locanda Montin and go to bed.



Thursday, February 21, 9 A.M.

I ring at Dr Z's house. The maid opens the door for me. She's the only one home and was told to take me to the guest room upon my arrival. She leads me there. With my Leica equipped with the Squintar, I approach the window. I am just a few meters from the entrance to Casa de Stefani. I wait for him, bent over. From time to time I photograph passers-by.

If I see him going out, I will not follow him. I want only to watch him one more time in hiding, photograph him, but I wouldn't want to annoy him, displease him

10 A.M. A young man rings at Z's house, drops off an envelope, then leaves.

11:30 A.M. I give him one last chance: I count to 100, he doesn't appear, I leave

Noon. I wander around Piazza San Marco.

During the afternoon I photograph Calle del Tragheto, section by section, on each side. A desperate gesture. But what to do?

This evening I will try not to go near him. I'll rest; I'll forget him for a while. My day has passed in bewilderment. Am I giving up?

I go to bed early.





Friday, February 22, 9 A.M.

As I did yesterday, I settle down at Dr Z's window. I leave at 11 A.M. without having seen him.

11:20 A.M. Piazza San Marco. I have my picture taken in front of the church by a local photographer.

In a blonde wig, my outstretched hand full of seeds for the pigeons, strangers watching me pose: I'm ashamed. What if he saw me?

I wander listlessly along the streets. *I'm weary.* The afternoon slips away like this, forlornly, absent-mindedly. *Did my adventure with him come to an end because he discovered me, because he knows?*

6 P.M. I go to the meeting set up by the antique dealer. I ring, the door opens. I climb to the second floor. Luigi greets me. I remind him that I was sent by Henri B. He exclaims, "Oh, yes! The one whose wife is a cabinet-maker. It was Daniele D who sent him to me." I nod my head.

Luigi remembers his visit; he says, thinking out loud, "Indeed, we chatted for quite a while the other night. He came to ask if I could direct him to abandoned palazzos. But I wasn't really able to help him." Luigi looks at me as if waiting for me to confirm this information. I remain silent, he continues.

I learn that Henri B is scouting locations in Venice because he's going to make a film here with B,

the Italian painter, that he's planning to take a year's lease on an apartment, and that he will come back in November.

This is what they were talking about last Monday.

Luigi has me sit down in one of his armchairs. He offers me a whiskey and inquires, "Did you know that Henri B is also taking pictures in Venice for a book by C, the English writer?" I nod yes. Luigi adds, "Look, they have even signed my guest book, the last names, there ...". I read: Henri B and N M, 6 avenue M, Paris. Telephone: 281- ...

The antique dealer stops talking about Henri B and starts in on the city's curiosities. I want to buy a small object, a souvenir from his shop. I choose a tiny knife with a wooden handle.

At 8 P.M. I take my leave. I spent two hours at the antique shop. He didn't ask me why I had come. *I could have discovered something significant about Henri B, something secret, during my shadowing of him or at Luigi's. I cannot stop contemplating this. How can I not imagine such a possibility even though today I am content that nothing has happened?*

I go back to my pensione. I have dinner at the restaurant on the main floor and at 11 P.M. I go to bed.



Saturday, February 23, 10 A.M.

I have my breakfast in the dining room at Locanda Montin. It's been six days since the owner, G, telephoned his friend at Casa de Stefani.

G approaches. I ask him if he would do me the favour of calling this person back and asking if Henri B's departure date has been set.

G calls right away. He finds out that Henri B and the woman will be leaving for Paris that very evening.

I go back to my room and pack my suitcases. I pay my bill and gratefully bid farewell to the owner.

At 11:30 A.M. I am at Luciana C's. *What to do in Venice without him? I think I should leave, but I also envision myself taking his room, sleeping in his bed.*

At my request, Luciana C calls Casa de Stefani. She says that since her friend, Henri B, is leaving the city, she would like to reserve that very pleasant room he had, starting this evening. The room, as well as all the others in the pensione, is already taken. *The only thing for me to do is leave Venice.*

12:30 P.M. I go to the train station in the company of Luciana C. The night train leaves Venice at

9:15 and arrives in Paris at 10:05 the next morning.

If I take the same train as he does, I inevitably will cross paths with him in the corridor. It will be too close and she will be there, too. I worry about a confrontation.

I check the information boards and confirm that by making a detour through Bologna, I can reach Paris five minutes before him (if the railways serve me well and stay on schedule).

If I take the 4:22 P.M. train for Bologna, I'll be there at 6:51 P.M. I'll then await the 9 P.M. train, which will arrive in Paris at 10 A.M. sharp.

Luciana C, who wants to know the end of this story and see France again, decides to accompany me.

I spend my last hours in the sun on my bench in Piazza San Marco

4:22 P.M. The train moves out. I have reclaimed my black hair and assumed my normal appearance.

7 P.M. Meal at the Bologna cafeteria and a short walk in the city's streets

9 P.M. The train to Paris. I fall asleep

I know I will see him one more time









Sunday, February 24, 10 A.M.

The Bologna train enters the Gare de Lyon, track J, at the scheduled time. I take out my camera and hurriedly get off to find out about the Venice train. Luciana takes care of the luggage; she will wait for me on the platform.

I walk a short distance. On my left a train enters the station on track H and passes me. It is 10:06 A.M. On the cars, the panels show Venice as the station of departure.

Track 1 is empty; from my platform I can watch the first passengers arrive. I wait for him.

10:08 A.M. I see him getting off the train. The woman follows him. Both of them carry cumbersome baggage. They walk slowly and with great effort toward the exit.

I photograph him one last time as he passes through the station gate.

I will go no farther. He moves away, I lose sight of him. *After these last thirteen days with him, our story comes to a close.*

10:10 A.M. I stop following Henri B.

THE DETECTIVE

In April 1981, at my request, my mother went
me to report my daily activities, and to provide

beyond that she was free to do whatever she wanted. Doggedly and dispassionately, never questioning the absurdity of her task, Maria stuck it out to the end. She was just nineteen when she started, a young girl entirely on her own, and yet she managed to fend for herself and avoid major catastrophes, living the sort of adventure that boys her age only dream of. At one point in her travels, a co-worker gave her an old thirty-five millimeter camera, and without any prior training or experience, she began taking photographs. When she saw her father in Chicago a few months after that, she told him that she had finally found something she liked doing. She showed him some of her photographs, and on the strength of those early attempts, he offered to make a bargain with her. If she went on taking photographs, he said, he would cover her expenses until she was in a position to support herself. It didn't matter how long it took, but she wasn't allowed to quit. That was the story she told me in any case, and I never had grounds to disbelieve it. All during the years of our affair, a deposit of one thousand dollars showed up in Maria's account on the first of every month, wired directly from a bank in Chicago.

She returned to New York, sold her van, and moved into the loft on Duane Street, a large empty room located on the floor above a wholesale egg and butter business. The first months were lonely and disorienting for her. She had no friends, no life to speak of, and the city seemed menacing and unfamiliar, as if she had never been there before. Without any conscious motives, she began following strangers around the streets, choosing someone at random when she left her house in the morning and allowing that choice to determine where she went for the rest of the day. It became a method of acquiring new thoughts, of filling up the emptiness that seemed to have engulfed her. Eventually, she began going out with her camera and taking pictures of the people she followed. When she returned home in the evening, she would sit down and write about where she had been and what she had done, using the strangers' itineraries to speculate about their lives and, in some cases, to compose brief, imaginary biographies. That was more or less how Maria stumbled into her

a detective agency. She hired them to follow photographic evidence of my existence.

career as an artist. Other works followed, all of them driven by the same spirit of investigation, the same passion for taking risks. Her subject was the eye, the drama of watching and being watched, and her pieces exhibited the same qualities one found in Maria herself: meticulous attention to detail, a reliance on arbitrary structures, patience bordering on the unendurable. In one work, she hired a private detective to follow her around the city. For several days, this man took pictures of her as she went about her rounds, recording her movements in a small notebook, omitting nothing from the account, not even the most banal and transitory events: crossing the street, buying a newspaper, stopping for a cup of coffee. It was a completely artificial exercise, and yet Maria found it thrilling that anyone should take such an active interest in her. Microscopic actions became fraught with new meaning, the driest routines were charged with uncommon emotion. After several hours, she grew so attached to the detective that she almost forgot she was paying him. When he handed in his report at the end of the week and she studied the photographs of herself and read the exhaustive chronologies of her movements, she felt as if she had become a stranger, as if she had been turned into an imaginary being.

For her next project, Maria took a temporary job as a chambermaid in a large midtown hotel. The point was to gather information about the guests, but not in any intrusive or compromising way. She intentionally avoided them in fact, restricting herself to what could be learned from the objects scattered about their rooms. Again she took photographs; again she invented life stories for them based on the evidence that was available to her. It was an archeology of the present, so to speak, an attempt to reconstitute the essence of something from only the barest fragments: a ticket stub, a torn stocking, a blood stain on the collar of a shirt. Some time after that, a man tried to pick up Maria on the street. She found him distinctly unattractive and rebuffed him. That same evening, by pure coincidence, she ran into him at a gallery opening in SoHo. They talked once again, and this time she learned from the man that he was leaving the next morning

Thursday, April 16, 1981, 10 A.M.

I am getting ready to go out. Outside, in the street, a man is waiting for me. He is a private detective. He is paid to follow me. I hired him to follow me, but he does not know that.

At 10:20 A.M. I go out. In the mailbox, a postcard from Mont Saint-Michel. I read: "Sophie, I think of you often. Vacation . . . beautiful weather . . . vacation. Hugs and kisses. See you soon. Patrick." The weather is clear, sunny. It's cold. I am wearing gray suede breeches, black tights, black shoes, and a gray raincoat. Over my shoulder a bright yellow bag, a camera. I take rue Gassendi and buy marigolds for eight francs at the flower shop. I enter Montparnasse cemetery and lay the flowers on Pierre V's grave, b. 1920 d. 1981. I continue through the cemetery. Every day, for years, when I was going to school, I took that same route. It pleased me to imagine that there was a man hidden in R's family vault, and that he survived only because of my love and the food I scrupulously left on his gravestone. At the cemetery exit, on boulevard Edgar-Quinet, I buy *Le Monde* and *Pariscope*.

At 10:40 A.M. I get to La Coupole, 102 boulevard du Montparnasse, where I have

an appointment with Nathalie M. I do not sit at our usual table, but closer to the window, and order a *café crème*. At 10:45 A.M. Nathalie M joins me. I've known her for years. She always seems so fragile. She is beautiful. I am superstitious, so I don't want to speak of "him", of the man who should be following me. I don't know if he is really here.

At 11:30 A.M. we leave La Coupole. Nathalie walks with me to a hair-dresser on rue Delambre. It is for "him" I am getting my hair done. To please him.

At 12:05 P.M. I leave the hair-dresser. My hair is electric; the young woman who hands me my raincoat is reassuring: "Outside, it will calm down." Then I walk towards Jardin du Luxembourg. I want to show "him" the streets, the places I love. I want "him" to be with me as I go through the Luxembourg, where I played as a child and where I received my first kiss in the spring of 1968. I keep my eyes lowered. I am afraid to see "him".

12:30 P.M. I am waiting for Eugene B, a publisher, beneath the statue of Danton at l'Odéon. We're supposed to talk about a book I would like to get published: five minutes go by.



My eyes meet, on the other side of the boulevard-Saint-Germain, those of a man about twenty-two years old, five feet six inches tall, short straight light brown hair, who jumps suddenly and attempts a hasty and awkward retreat behind a car. It's "him". A stranger steps up to me and asks where I bought my raincoat. Eugene B comes at 12:40 P.M. He kisses me and takes me to an outdoor café nearby. At 1:05 P.M. we say goodbye. I head for the Panthéon. From a phone booth, I call Bernard F, whom I would very much like "him" to see. When I was nine, I was certain Bernard F was my father. Going through my mother's letters, I found and stole a letter he wrote which began: "My darling, I hope you are seriously thinking of sending our Sophie to boarding school ...". When he came to visit my mother, I would sit on his lap and stare expectantly at him. Then Bernard F's visits became less frequent. I stopped sitting on his lap, everyone told me how much I looked like my father. By the age of twelve, I had forgotten this mistaken lineage. My call wakes him up. He tells me that he is not ready to cope with the street.

1:20 P.M. I get to my studio, located at 36 rue d'Ulm in the former premises of the Couvent de l'Adoration Réparatrice. A short stop to pick up some papers. At 1:30 P.M. I come out again. I decide to stroll around Paris. I take rue Soufflot, boulevards Saint-Michel and Saint-Germain. I'm afraid I've lost "him". Since our "meeting" at the Carrefour de l'Odéon, not once did I feel his presence. I walk in the middle of the street.

Arriving in front of 34 rue de Seine, Galerie Eric Fabre, I try to push open the glass door. It does not budge. Further down the same street, in front of number 6, I wait for H Roger-Viollet, Documentation Photographique, to open. I walk in at 2 P.M. and ask for the file on private detectives. I flip through the photographs: All the faces look older than "him" (I am reassured by his youth). I buy a portrait of Detective Lepage. As I raise my eyes, through the window, sitting on a bench across the street, the same young man I spotted at the Carrefour de l'Odéon. Now I trust him. I'm not afraid of losing him anymore. I've become a part of the life of X, private detective. I structured his day, Thursday, April 16, in much the same way that he has influenced mine.

At 2:10 P.M. I move on. I cross the Pont Royal and head for the Louvre. At 2:20 P.M., after walking quickly through the museum, I find myself in front of Titian's *Man with a Glove*. I have always liked this painting. The sad vacant eyes. The pouting mouth. The face as if beheaded resting on a lace collar. But above all, this hint of a mustache.

At 3:10 P.M. I leave the Louvre. In the garden of the Tuileries a photographer offers to take my picture with my camera. I accept. At 3:20 P.M. I stop at the Tuileries' outdoor café and order a beer. I take pleasure in watching "him" have his drink at the counter.

At 4 P.M. I leave the Tuileries, cross the Place de la Concorde. At 4:30 P.M. I enter the Palais de la Découverte (Discovery Exhibition center), which seemed

à propos. I have an appointment with Jacques M. I see his silhouette on the second floor. We meander from room to room. In a doorway "he" brushes past us. At 5:15 P.M. we leave the Palais de la Découverte. I walk with Jacques M to his car. I give him a kiss and continue my walk alone. I decide to rest in a movie theater. I walk up the Champs-Élysées and after hesitating between Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen* and Lautner's *Is It Reasonable?*, a detective comedy, I opt for the former and enter the Gaumont-Colisée at 5:25 P.M. Inside, I only think of "him". Is he enjoying this scattered, diffuse, and ephemeral day I have offered him—our day? Half an hour later, at 6 P.M., I leave the theater. I walk toward Châtelet.

At 7 P.M. I arrive at Galerie Chantal Crousel, 80 rue Quincampoix, for the Gilbert & George opening. There, I meet my father and take him outside with me. I want "him" to see my father. Back at the gallery I chat, forgetting "him" a little. At 8 P.M. friends take me by car to a party for George and Gilbert in an apartment at 120 avenue de Wagram. At midnight I leave in the same car to Le Palace, where we have been invited, still in honor of Gilbert & George. I get to know Dan J better, whom I met a few months earlier.

At 2 A.M. a taxi takes us both to the OK Bar at Vavin. I eat spaghetti and drink whiskey.

At 5 A.M. we grab another taxi to go to his hotel, the Hôtel Tiquetonne. I am drunk and fall asleep. Before closing my eyes, I think of "him". I wonder if he liked me, if he will think of me tomorrow.

REPORT

Thursday, April 16, 1981

At 10:00 a.m. I take up position outside the home of the subject, 22 rue Liancourt, Paris 14th.

At 10:20 the subject leaves home. She is dressed in a gray raincoat, gray trousers, and wears black shoes with stockings of the same color. She carries a yellow shoulder bag.

At 10:23 the subject buys some daffodils at the florist's on the corner of rue Froidevaux and rue Gassendi, then enters Montparnasse cemetery at 5 rue Emile-Richard. She lays the flowers on a tomb then leaves the cemetery on the boulevard Edgar-Quinet side.

At 10:37 the subject buys a newspaper from the stand at 202 boulevard Raspail.









At 10:40 she enters 100 boulevard Montparnasse.

At 11:32 the subject comes out of the building in the company of a friend aged approximately twenty-seven, height 5'5", of very stout build, long brown hair, wearing light brown trousers and a black sweater.

At 11:38 the subject says goodbye to her friend outside 21 rue Delambre and enters the Jacques Guérin hair salon.

At 12:08 the subject leaves the salon and crosses the Jardin du Luxembourg and appears to wait outside Odéon metro station.

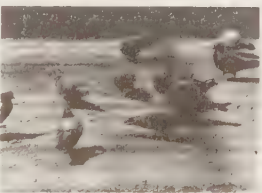
At 12:40 a man of about sixty, 5'6", very stout, wearing a gray suit with a gray hat and spectacles with thick black frames, kisses the subject on the cheek.

At 12:43 the subject and the man sit down outside Le Condé, the café on the Carrefour de l'Odéon. They have something to drink and talk. The subject holds the man's arm.

At 1:02 the subject and the man part company.

At 1:18 the subject phones from a booth outside 13 rue d'Ulm. After making this call, she goes into the courtyard of 26 rue d'Ulm (church).

At 1:25 she comes out and walks down rue de Seine. She stops outside Galerie Chardin at number 36 but the gallery is closed. She comes back and goes into 8 rue de Seine, the shop "H. Roger-Viollet Documentation Photographique". She stays there for about eight minutes.







At 2:15 the subject enters the Louvre museum and walks to the Salle des Etats, stopping before the painting by Titian, "Man with a Glove". She takes notes and also a photograph. She stays in front of the painting for about half an hour.

At 3:10 she leaves the Louvre and crosses the Tuileries. She has herself photographed by a street photographer.





At 3:20 the subject
takes a drink at the
outdoor café in the
Tuileries gardens
and writes.

At 3:55 the subject
leaves the café and
heads for the Place de
la Concorde.





At 4:25 she enters the Palais de la Découverte and meets a man aged about fifty, 5'8", slim, with metal-framed spectacles; he is wearing white trousers, a beige canvas jacket, and a gray hat. The subject and the man hold hands and walk around the museum.

At 5:10 the subject and the man leave the Palais de la Découverte and head toward rue Franklin-D-Roosevelt where, after kissing, they part outside number 1. The man gets behind the wheel of a white Range Rover, license number 383 BKX 75, and drives off.

At 5:25 the subject goes into the Gaumont-Colisée cinema at 36 avenue des Champs-Élysées to see the film "Lili Marleen".

At 7:25 the subject leaves the cinema and goes into the Franklin-Roosevelt metro station where she boards a train bound for Pont-de-Sèvres. She changes at Trocadéro and takes the direction Nation.

At 7:55 the subject gets off the train at the station Denfert-Rochereau.

At 8:00 the subject returns home.
The surveillance ends.

I wanted to have a souvenir of the person who would be following me. I didn't know which day of the week the tailing would take place, so I asked François M to be outside the Palais de la Découverte every day at 5 P.M. and to photograph anyone who seemed to be tailing me. I received the following report, accompanied by a set of photographs: "Thursday, April 16, 1981, at about 5:15 P.M., Sophie Calle came out of the Palais de la Découverte. I immediately noticed that she was being followed by a young man aged about twenty-five, in a leather jacket, with a camera round his neck and a bag over his shoulder. He was walking about twenty meters behind her and photographed her at the first cross-roads. I, in turn, photographed him. We entered avenue Franklin-Roosevelt and crossed the Champs-Élysées.

"At 5:25 Sophie Calle entered the Gaumont-Colisée cinema. The man waited for a few moments; I think he was noting the times of the showings. Then he continued on his way up the avenue to the Lord Byron, where the poster had *Emmanuelle* and *The Daughters of Madame D.*

"At 5:30 the man went into the cinema and that was the last I saw of him."





THE HOTEL

On Monday, February 16, 1981, I was hired as
in a Venetian hotel. I was assigned twelve hours
cleaning duties. I examined the personal belongings
details lives which remained unknown to me.

beyond that she was free to do whatever she wanted. Doggedly and dispassionately, never questioning the absurdity of her task, Maria stuck it out to the end. She was just nineteen when she started, a young girl entirely on her own, and yet she managed to fend for herself and avoid major catastrophes, living the sort of adventure that boys her age only dream of. At one point in her travels, a co-worker gave her an old thirty-five millimeter camera, and without any prior training or experience, she began taking photographs. When she saw her father in Chicago a few months after that, she told him that she had finally found something she liked doing. She showed him some of her photographs, and on the strength of those early attempts, he offered to make a bargain with her. If she went on taking photographs, he said, he would cover her expenses until she was in a position to support herself. It didn't matter how long it took, but she wasn't allowed to quit. That was the story she told me in any case, and I never had grounds to disbelieve it. All during the years of our affair, a deposit of one thousand dollars showed up in Maria's account on the first of every month, wired directly from a bank in Chicago.

She returned to New York, sold her van, and moved into the loft on Duane Street, a large empty room located on the floor above a wholesale egg and butter business. The first months were lonely and disorienting for her. She had no friends, no life to speak of, and the city seemed menacing and unfamiliar, as if she had never been there before. Without any conscious motives, she began following strangers around the streets, choosing someone at random when she left her house in the morning and allowing that choice to determine where she went for the rest of the day. It became a method of acquiring new thoughts, of filling up the emptiness that seemed to have engulfed her. Eventually, she began going out with her camera and taking pictures of the people she followed. When she returned home in the evening, she would sit down and write about where she had been and what she had done, using the strangers' itineraries to speculate about their lives and, in some cases, to compose brief, imaginary biographies. That was more or less how Maria stumbled into her

temporary chambermaid for three weeks
on the fourth floor. In the course of one
of the hotel guests and observed through
Friday, March 6, the job came to an end.

career as an artist. Other works followed, all of them driven by the same spirit of investigation, the same passion for taking risks. Her subject was the eye, the drama of watching and being watched, and her pieces exhibited the same qualities one found in Maria herself: meticulous attention to detail, a reliance on arbitrary structures, patience bordering on the unendurable. In one work, she hired a private detective to follow her around the city. For several days, this man took pictures of her as she went about her rounds, recording her movements in a small notebook, omitting nothing from the account, not even the most banal and transitory events: crossing the street, buying a newspaper, stopping for a cup of coffee. It was a completely artificial exercise, and yet Maria found it thrilling that anyone should take such an active interest in her. Microscopic actions became fraught with new meaning, the driest routines were charged with uncommon emotion. After several hours, she grew so attached to the detective that she almost forgot she was paying him. When he handed in his report at the end of the week and she studied the photographs of herself and read the exhaustive chronologies of her movements, she felt as if she had become a stranger, as if she had been turned into an imaginary being.

For her next project, Maria took a temporary job as a chambermaid in a large midtown hotel. The point was to gather information about the guests, but not in any intrusive or compromising way. She intentionally avoided them in fact, restricting herself to what could be learned from the objects scattered about their rooms. Again she took photographs; again she invented life stories for them based on the evidence that was available to her. It was an archeology of the present, so to speak, an attempt to reconstitute the essence of something from only the barest fragments: a ticket stub, a torn stocking, a blood stain on the collar of a shirt. Some time after that, a man tried to pick up Maria on the street. She found him distinctly unattractive and rebuffed him. That same evening, by pure coincidence, she ran into him at a gallery opening in SoHo. They talked once again, and this time she learned from the man that he was leaving the next morning







Monday, February 16, 9 A.M.
I go into Room 25. The only room on the floor with a single bed, and the first one I enter. The sight of the crumpled navy pajamas with the light blue piping left on the bed and the brown leather slippers does something to me. The occupant is a man. There are a few clues by the washbasin: a dirty comb with missing teeth, a toothbrush, toothpaste, and Mennen deodorant. On the table: *Time*, the *International Herald Tribune*, and a book, *The Moon and Sixpence*, by W Somerset Maugham, with a marker at page 198. On the windowsill outside are apples and oranges in two paper bags. On the night table I find a hardcover notebook, his travel log. I go through it. "Friday: Rome ... Tuesday: Florence ..." and under yesterday's date, these lines: "... arrived in Venice this

morning ... up to my room, had a bath, a couple of oranges + apples + will crash. I have told the desk to wake me up at 8:30 + will go to the market which Rob says is ex...". I also find two Paris addresses: Count and Countess M, and Ambassador O. I stop reading. I don't want to take it all in today. I make the bed and leave. It is 9:15 A.M.

Tuesday 17, 9:30 A.M. Today I open the closet. Few clothes. But good-quality ones: tweeds, woolens ... subdued colors: gray, navy, brown. A pair of large white underpants lines the bottom of the drawer. In the corner of the closet, a nearly empty toilet kit: it contains some night cream for pimples, needles, and thread inside a lipstick case — I see there is no razor — and a list of clothes he is traveling with.

By elimination, that tells me that today he is wearing blue trousers, a blue T-shirt, and a windbreaker. I clean the room and start to read his diary. His handwriting is poor, heavy, irregular. I re-read his remarks about Venice: "Sunday, February 15, 1981. We arrived in Venice this morning. We took the train. It is really spectacular. No cars, just pretty little streets and small bridges over the canals. We sat outside and had drinks of various strange things. We went back to the hotel. I am in a tiny room by myself. Ran out and bought a kilo of oranges and apples and put them on my win- dowsill. We went out and had a very good walk. I ate a good soup, noodles with tomato sauce, and drank a lot of white wine. Went to Piazza San Marco, had a grappa. Made me feel not too good. Went back to Hotel C.

I slept a bit. Rob and I went strolling. Stayed at a bar and had a beer. Came back. Rob went up. Got a postcard from the desk and went to hotel bar and had a beer + cig. I wrote a long postcard to Ol. Up to my room, had a bath, ate some oranges and apples, and will crash. I have told the desk to wake me up at 8:30 ...". Sounds in the hallway. I close the diary. As I put it down, someone enters the room. I pick up my rags, my bucket (where my camera and tape recorder are hidden), lower my gaze and leave. He is dressed the way I thought; he is about twenty-eight, with a weak face. I will try to forget him.

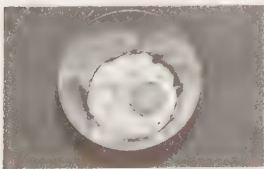
Wednesday 18, 9:40 A.M. He has finished the apples and oranges. The wastebasket is full of peel. He's still on page 198 of Somerset Maugham's book. Nothing has



changed in the room. So I have a look inside the bag of dirty laundry hanging on the door, and empty it on the bed. I go back to the diary. Nothing for the 16th. But for the 17th there are these lines: "Yesterday I walked around. Went to restaurant. Had excellent lasagne. Today we went and had lunch at Harry's Bar which is supposed to be the best restaurant in the world. And it was good. I had good green noodles with excellent sauce. In the afternoon, went to see Steve McQueen in Italian. I had a beer in a square. Then some guy tried to pick me up. I think I will have a bad dream about it tonight."

And that's it. I also find a postcard addressed to someone named Olivier R (no address). In it the occupant of Room 25 describes in detail the menu of his latest meal.

Thursday 19, noon. He is gone. He has left his orange peel in the wastebasket, three fresh eggs on the windowsill and the remains of a croissant which I polish off. I shall miss him.



ROOM 28



Monday, February 16, 9:30 A.M. I go into Room 28. Only one bed has been slept in. I find an impressive pile of luggage on the right along the wall. Four Vuitton suitcases stacked on top of each other, three traveling bags, a row of shoes; eight pairs for the woman (size 38) and five pairs for the man (size 42). I open the wardrobes. On the right, some men's clothes including three new pairs of shoes in felt covers, a hat, two pairs of white underpants, and one pair of pants with thick braces. All of them of a fine quality. I imagine some older well-off people. In the bathroom, nothing special except a pink flannelette nightgown. I put on some of their Chanel No. 5 perfume. I hastily open one of their suitcases. I catch a glimpse

of *The Economist* magazine, some bananas in a plastic bag. Once the room is made up, I leave.

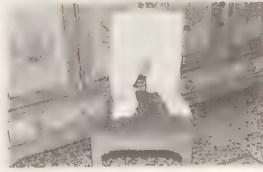
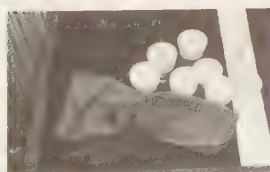
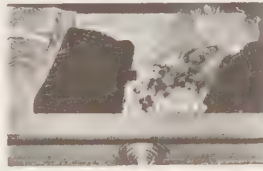
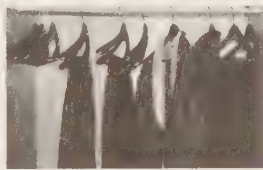
Tuesday 17, 9:10 A.M. The twin beds have been slept in. In the wastebasket, the banana peels, a bottle of water, and a pair of hardly worn black flat heels (they fit me; I take them). On the chair, a thick white cotton pajama bottom. To the left, some mints, a crossword on a bedside table, an alarm clock, a torch, a roll of Scotch tape, three pairs of glasses, a book, *Games with Love and Death* by Arthur Schnitzler. In the chest upper drawer, I find two handbags, some pearl necklaces in a plastic bag, and ten small identical boxes full of white pills wrapped in a Fitzgerald shoe cover. The two lower drawers contain some women's clothes, silk blouses, pastel color scarves.

Wednesday 18, 9 A.M. The two beds have been slept in. There is some progress on the crossword grid started yesterday. The pajama bottom is still in the same place. I lift the suitcases: three of them seem to be full. I open them. In the first one I find a toilet kit, in the second a set of identical Brooks Brothers shirts with blue-and-white stripes. In the third one, a book, *Artists in Crime* by Ngaio Marsh, a Minox camera, a denture (lower jaw), a 7" x 9 1/2" photograph of a sailing boat on the sea, a reservation at the Milan Carlton for February 19, a portrait of the Pope, an envelope addressed to Mrs H, Baltimore, with the following notations on the back: "Jean Paul Belmondo, rue de la Paix, Paris 5e" (the street number is not mentioned, the

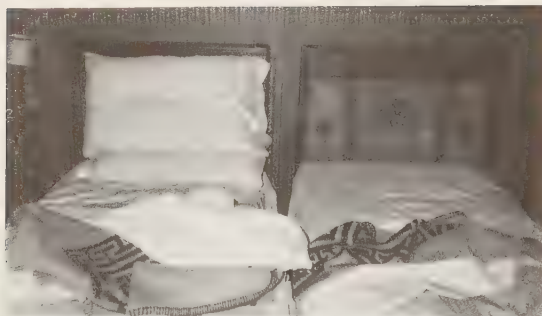
Room 28, February 16-19

arrondissement number is wrong, the post-office cancelation has been written over in ball-point), a series of index cards with columns of numbers (stock exchange quotations?). I hear some noise, hastily close the suitcase, and make the bed

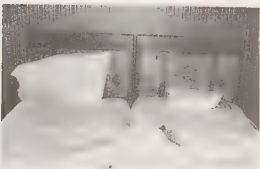
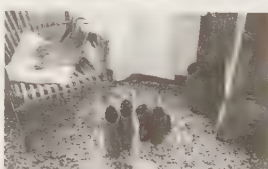
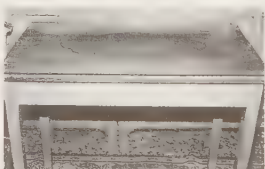
Thursday 19, noon. They have gone. They have left nothing behind. I take a last photograph of the unmade beds. The memory I will keep of them is the obscene image of the pajama bottom, lying stupidly on the chair



Room 28, March 3-6



Tuesday, March 3, 9:15 A.M.
I enter Room 28. The twin beds are unmade. The person on the left sleeps with two pillows; the one on the right, with none. I notice men's red-and-black silk pajamas on the chair and embroidered babouche-type slippers (size 38). These are the only visible signs of occupancy along with a suitcase and traveling bag, both locked. The cupboards are empty except for some white underwear (two pairs



of underpants and an undershirt) in the top drawer of the chest, a few toiletry items (razors, shaving brush ...) and some medicine in the bidet in the bathroom.

There is nothing else to see. I clean the room and leave.

Wednesday 4, 10 A.M.

The suitcases are still locked shut. The babouches and pajamas in their respective places. Today, the occupant of the right-hand bed made a little pillow out of a cushion from the sofa, covered with a towel. On the left, there is now only one pillow. I notice that the bedside table has been turned around so that the drawer is lodged against the bed. I set it straight. The drawer is, in fact, empty.

Thursday 5, 9 A.M. Two pairs of boots (sizes 38 and 42) have appeared. The suitcases are still locked shut. The three pieces of underwear have not moved. And still in the same place are the babouches and pajamas. For once, the pillows have remained as I arranged them. They have not touched the table.

Friday 6, 10 A.M. The situation is the same (pajamas, babouches, suitcases, bathroom, table, underclothes, boots). It's my last day of work at the Hotel C. I leave it up to my successor to observe the variations on the pillows in Room 28. Today, the one on the left, falling off the bed slightly, bears the rounded imprint of a presence. I see this as a farewell signal.



Monday, February 16, 10 A.M.
I go into Room 44. Only one of the beds is unmade, the one on the right. A strong musty smell. I open the windows wide. At first glance, it seems there's a man staying here: I see an enormous pair of shoes under the luggage stand. On the suitcase, locked shut, some postcards written in German and all with addresses in Basel.

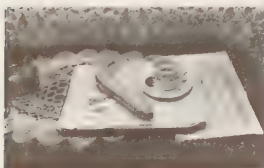
For his breakfast, simply a cup of coffee. He hasn't touched the banana. In the wardrobe, his only clothing is a sheepskin jacket. In one of its pockets, I find a diary with German writing, a language which I don't speak. The only thing that is comprehensible is the date of February 24, between 3 and 5 P.M.: Nietzsche. In the other pocket, various objects which I spread out on the bed to photograph: three handkerchiefs,

a brush, two stoppers from salt shakers, some unfilled prescription sheets from the hospital in Basel (on one is written: "Aspirin"), a tape measure.

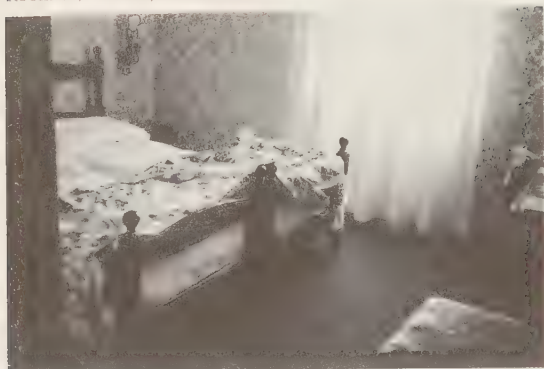
In the bathroom, men's toiletries and three bathmitts. The man wears Nouvelle Image cologne. I photograph the locked suitcase, the indecipherable postcards, all of these signs, in vain. I hear some noise in the stairwell and hide my camera in my pail. The door opens. He comes in. He has a nice smile. In hesitant Italian, I think he says to me, "Thank you for all of your kindness," and he hands me some lire. My first tip. I return his smile and leave the room.

11:30 A.M. He has left without revealing himself. Under the pillow, the man has left his handkerchief

Room 44, February 16



Room 44, February 17–March 1



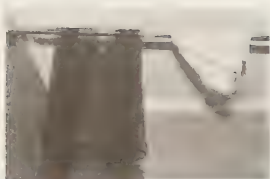
Tuesday 17, 10 A.M. I go into Room 44. Just one unmade bed, on the left. On the luggage stand is a nylon traveling bag, locked with a padlock. In the bathroom, cosmetics, a bottle of J'ai osé toilet water, black stockings, and a pair of white panties which are drying. I think of the man who stayed in this room yesterday with the same sense of privacy, he who slept in the right-hand bed. Fleeting images of a missed encounter.

Wednesday 18, 10:20 A.M.
She wears green pajamas; they've been left on the pillow. On the table, some Kleenex and a book, *Terapia 80*. She's taken a bath. The room is still just as clean, empty. I spray myself with perfume, put on some of her make-up, clean the room, and leave.

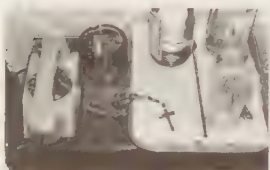
Thursday 19, 1 P.M. The "Do not disturb" sign is still hanging from the door handle when I leave.

Friday 20, Saturday 21, Sunday 22, Monday 23, the same: impossible to go in.

Tuesday 24, 11 A.M. This time the two beds are unmade. On the left-hand pillow, the green pajamas. The person on the right sleeps without a pillow; in its place there is a mauve nightshirt with pink flowers, carefully folded. The mirror between the two sconces on the wall which faces the bed has been taken down. I find it in the wardrobe and put it back in its place. On the floor is a vase with flowers. The room has come to life. On the bedside table to the left, a stethoscope, a sphygmomanometer. On the right, a rosary and a bottle of mineral water. The bathroom is packed: curlers, bath cap, sanitary towels, creams, lotions ... perfume, Jolie Madame by Balmain.



In the wardrobe I find an electric blanket, dresses—almost all of them evening dresses, some clothes in imitation leopardskin, a bright red nylon wig, a Venetian mask, etc..



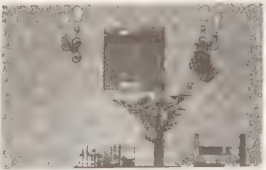
Wednesday 25, 11:15 A.M.
The wilted roses are in the wastebasket and the mirror is still hanging on the wall. The night clothes are in their respective places: the green pajamas on the left, the mauve nightshirt on the right. Today, I dig around. In one suitcase I find English crackers, bandages, syringes. In the other, more crackers.



And in a black handbag, a diary with only two addresses in the address section, under R and S, and for February 20, the words: "Amaretti, spugne" (cookies, sponge cake).



Thursday 26 and Friday 27:
"Do not disturb".



Saturday 28, 11:30 A.M. I am short on time. I make the bed. Apparently nothing in the room has changed.

Sunday, March 1, noon.
They have left. The only traces of their stay: Nescafé and crackers in the waste-basket. The smell of smoke. The future occupants' baggage has already been brought into the room.



Monday, February 16, 11 A.M.
I hear a woman's laugh coming from Room 46. A quarter of an hour later, the bellboy knocks on the door, brings in breakfast for two and leaves. I go up to the room to listen.

She says, "Oh! This is lovely."

He replies, "But anybody can make that."

She says, "This is chocolate the way I like it." He laughs throatily.

My services are wanted elsewhere. When I come back ten minutes later, the subject of conversation is still the same. She says, "I really don't know how they make that."

12:30 A.M. The bellboy knocks on their door, takes the tray, and leaves.

She says, "Oh! Those Italians!" and "Oh! no, don't do that! I've got problems. I swear! You're too much!"

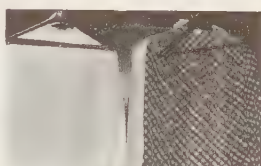
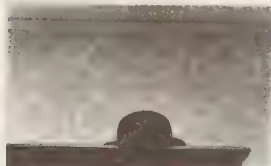
I hear them kiss.

She says, "You shouldn't do that! I haven't been to the loo this morning," whereupon she shrieks, "Oh, I forgot to lock the door!" The key turns in the lock. It's 1 P.M. They're loudly making love and I go off my shift.

Tuesday 17, 11:20 A.M.

I pass by Room 46. I hear the woman say, "I told you when we left ..." followed by silence. By 12:40 P.M. they have gone out. I go in. The first thing to catch the eye is the mind-bogglingly huge pair of shoes, under the table, that blocks out everything else. I then find the following items scattered about the room: a carton of Camel cigarettes, a pair of Ray-Ban glasses, a Sony Walkman with two sets of earphones, tapes (Bernard

Lavilliers. *The Doors*), books: *Eurocar*, *Retour à Brooklyn* by Hubert Selby Jr, *Le complot du Caire* by Gerard de Villiers, *La grande chasse au requin* by Hunter S Thompson, and three comic books: *Les Celtiques* and *Fables de Venise* by Hugo Pratt, and *A Suivre*, special John Lennon issue. A knife and sheath, a book by M V Stumza on aerospace medicine, notes on the same subject, and stationery with the letterhead of Carcassonne's City Hall. One of them wears striped pajamas at night, the other a black silk slip and pink bed jacket. All the clothes are hanging in the wardrobe. In the suitcase are two pairs of women's panties, tampons, a pair of men's underpants, a tube, and a jar of vaseline. The bathroom is a mess.



Wednesday 18, 10 A.M.
The room is empty. They have checked out. On a piece of paper in the wastebasket is the following text, scribbled in pencil: "Ghetto, Court of Malta and gilded mouth. Court of Malta, wooden staircase, street of love, of friends, the bridge of wonders.

On the way back, old ghetto. Crazy staircase. Turk sewer rats. No longer exists. House bricked-up windows. Secret courtyard of mysteries. Candelabras. Huntress. Arrow. Bow. Cows. Six-pointed stars. A circle. Naked young girl. Ground. Names of fallen angels: Samael, Satael, Amabel. Narrow

passage of nostalgia. Hebrews' seraglio, fine ideas. Bat in alabaster niche."

They have forgotten a pair of panties and socks that are drying on the bathroom radiator. The towels are all over the place and the water is still running in the washbasin.



Thursday, March 19, 1 P.M.
The "Do not disturb" sign is still hanging from the door handle when I leave work.

Friday 20: "Do not disturb".

Saturday 21: "Do not disturb".
I stick my ear against the door of the room. Inside it is silent.

Sunday 22: "Do not disturb".

Monday 23: "Do not disturb".
I begin to wonder if they are really staying in there.

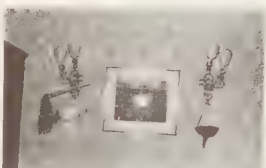
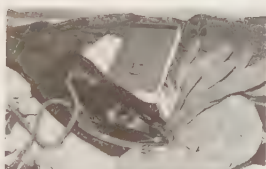
The curtains must be pulled shut; through the keyhole, darkness.

Tuesday 24: "Do not disturb".
The floor waiter tells me that they gener-ally go out at around five o'clock.

Wednesday 25, 12:50 P.M.
They leave the room. I have ten minutes to do it up before the maid on the next shift arrives. I have finally succeeded in getting inside. And now, looking at the objects, the unmade beds, I feel a certain lack of interest. In any case, I don't have enough time

to really dig around. I decide to put off a more thorough search until tomorrow. I content myself with taking a few photographs: the carnival masks hung on the sconce, the Pierrot costume, the iron I noticed in the suitcase, the two pairs of slippers waiting at the foot of each bed. In the folds of the sheets, I find a lobster claw.

Thursday 26, 10 A.M.
The baggage is set out in front of the door. The room is empty. A balloon floats under the ceiling.





Sunday, February 22, 10 A.M.
I go into Room 47. All the beds are unmade: the double bed, the single bed, and the small fold-up bed. The first thing I notice are four pairs of slippers: two pairs for adults, two for children. There is French toast on the table, a balloon hanging from a handle on the chest of drawers. On the right-hand bedside table: a book on legal and fiscal research companies and some Marlboros in the drawer. On the left-hand one: a guide to French hotels and, in the drawer, some Tampax. At night, he wears light cotton green pajamas, and she, a blue flannelette nightie. There's a suitcase on the floor. Inside it I find several plastic bags filled with medications and a book, *Venise et ses trésors d'art*. On the luggage stand, a second suitcase.

It is full. I don't go through it, I just look. I am already bored with these guests. In the wardrobe: two pairs of trousers, a mauve sweater, a mauve shirt, three pairs of Eminence briefs, red, black, and pale blue. Only the bright-colored slippers cheer up the room. At the foot of the night table, a leather briefcase containing two Swiss passports (they are a married couple living in Geneva; I just note that she is of medium height with dark eyes and brown hair and he of medium height with blue eyes and brown hair); a sheet of paper with a few typed lines: "Amazing Venice. You dream of it all those years and then one day, you're off to the City of Doges which you think you already know after all you've read and seen and heard. The most striking

thing is probably the silence. No sound of cars, motorbikes or anything else. You can hear people talking in the street, there's no dashing around. In fact, that is impossible here: no one can run through these narrow, winding streets, constantly cut off by stairways and bridges. In this city, you either walk or do nothing. It is therefore wise to bring comfortable shoes and a Confortil spray ...".

Further down, these handwritten words: "Glassware: not bad. Cemetery: fantastic. Gondola ride: worth it."

Monday 23, 9:45 A.M.
The bathroom is messier than yesterday. They took a bath. The towels are piled up in the bidet. The cigarette pack is



unopened. The book on Venice, taken out of the suitcase, is now set on the bedside table. Next to it, I find four postcards: views of the city. The first is addressed to Mr and Mrs D in Geneva: "Greetings and warm regards. See you soon. The S family." The second to the G family in Barcelona: "Everything is very beautiful here. We send you warm regards. See you soon. The S family."



The third to the G family in Barcelona: "Dear all: Venice is very beautiful. Every corner is a little work of art. Tomorrow, *Dios mediante*, we go to see the surrounding islands. *Abrazos*, The S family." Lastly, the fourth one, addressed to the Bs in Geneva: "Everything is very beautiful here but it would be even more so if we were enjoying it together as a family. See you soon. The S family." In the wastebasket I find a postcard torn into eight pieces.

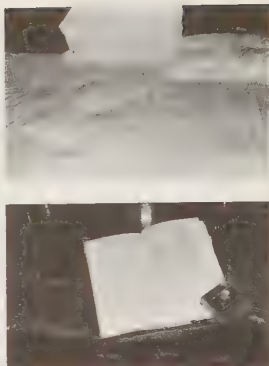


It is of the same scene as the one addressed to the Bs, and is addressed to these same. Only the text is different. One could read: "Everything is very beautiful here but it would be even more so if we were enjoying it with you. See you soon. The S family."



Tuesday 24, 10:30 A.M.

They are going to leave. Their suitcases are packed and are set in front of the door. They leave behind the balloon, which is hanging limp, and stale biscuits



Monday, March 2, 10 A.M.

Through the door, I hear a shrill, coarse voice, a woman's voice: "That's the one! I like that one a lot!" At 11:30 the room is empty and I go in. The big bed is unmade.

My first sensation is of banality and an exemplary neatness. Nothing on the table, empty drawers, no clothing showing. A single book, the *Guide Michelin Italie*, has been placed on the left-hand bedside table. On the floor, an attaché case. Inside it, a red hot-water bottle. In the bathroom, nothing in particular to catch one's eye: ordinary toiletries, some Microlax for constipation, some Calèche perfume, contraceptive pills, and various lotions for sensitive skin. There's only the wardrobe left to explore. I open it. On the left, the man: Cacharel and Daniel Hechter shirts, gray suits, ties, etc.. On the right, the woman: corduroy trousers, wool skirts, etc..

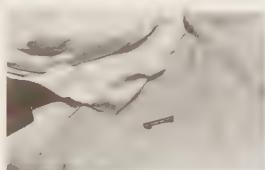
The suitcase has a sticker on it: "M et Mme C, Paris, 11e".

It contains three pairs of panties, bathmitts, three pairs of socks, striped pajamas, a sachet of sandalwood, some coat hangers, a clothes brush, a hairdryer, an Olympus camera, a plastic bag with the dirty laundry (three pairs of panties, a bra, a blouse), some leather soap, a book called *Belle Italie*, an electric extension cord, some keys, a guide to French hotels, a list of the Sofitel chain of hotels, a pocket torch, some rags and shoe polish, a wallet.

In the wallet I find the following documents: two international drivers' licenses in the names of Antoine C, born in 1943, and Emmanuelle C, born in 1948. Bills from some other Venetian hotels (they spent the night of February 26 in Room 18 of the Hotel Cavaletto and the night of February 28 in Room 10 of the Luna). Some Touring Club de France roadmaps, an account statement from Galeries Lafayette, and a diary in the name of Eliane C.

I check out how she spends her time. February 1 at noon: tennis in Neuilly. February 5: bank lunch. February 6: flowers, elephant, English dinner. February 10: Carita, eleven o'clock. February 19: lunch. February 28: holidays. Nothing for January or March. In the "Notes" section of the book, a page is devoted to their water consumption: "Hot water. 6.6.79, bedrm: 11m³, bathrm: 14m³, 10.20.79, bedrm: 16m³, bathrm: 48m³. 2.10.80, bedrm: 20m³, bathrm: 70m³. 6.7.80, bedrm: 24m³, bathrm: 100m³. 10.15.80, bedrm: 27m³, bathrm: 125m³. 1.31.81, bedrm: 30m³, bathrm: 150m³."

On a second page, various dates: "Monsieur C: 12.11.1912; Madame C: 1.26 [the woman's age is not mentioned], Laurent: 1.24.71; Johanna: 1.24.71". Then a list of books: "*Mémoires de l'Afghanistan, La route des Indes, Iles et presqu'îles de l'Extrême-Orient*". On a last page, the following list: "Clouds and sun (400 ASA 125e) / Stakes with



seagulls and Isola San Giorgio to the north / The base of the first column near the Ducal Palace / A guest framed by two windows of Florian's which reflect the square / Chandeliers under the colonnade and view toward the cathedral Red-and-blue mooring posts. The Arsenal / Nun dressed in white going into the hospital / Two pigeons billing and cooing".

The address book contains a dozen home telephone numbers as well as the following numbers: Hôtel Bristol, BHV, BMW, neighbor, Carita, CFDT, Cacharel, Antar, framer, Galeries Lafayette, Golfe, Léviton, psycho-therapist: Mrs V, nurse: Miss D, jeweler, painter, concierge, Social Security, department store, Sucaflor, taxis, Harry's Bar, Blvd Haussmann Printemps, Place d'Italie Printemps Dessanges hair salon, the hospice, etc.. I postpone my reading to go and do Room 43.

Tuesday 3, 10 A.M. The *Guide Michelin* has been put away in

the wardrobe and replaced on the bedside table by a list of Banque Herve cash machines, a Hippopotamus steak house brochure, and unused envelopes. There's an umbrella lying around. On the left, the person sleeps with two pillows, on the right with one. The brown raincoat is no longer in the wardrobe (it's raining) and a blue Cardin shirt has been put in the bag of dirty washing. I can't see the pocket torch. I go back to the diary. In the calendar, the days 1.3, 1.4, 1.9, 1.17, 1.18, 1.23, 1.31, 2.1, 2.6, 2.8, 2.14, 2.15, 2.20, 2.28, 3.1, and 3.2 have been crossed out in blue. The 2, 3, 4, and 5 are marked with a cross and February 6 and 8 are crossed out and marked with a cross.

Wednesday 4, 10.30 A.M. The *Guide Michelin* has been brought back out and, with the list of Sofitel hotels, has been put on the right-hand table. A flat packet lies on the bed. I open it: it is a poster of the Venice Carnival.

Thursday 5, 10 A.M. On my way past the door of Room 47, I hear the woman's shrill voice: "I wanted to wear the raincoat, but I'm cold," she says.

11:15 A.M. I go into Room 47. A second umbrella has been set beside the first. They have bought a spray can of Pronto, a cleaning product.

Friday 6, 10:30 A.M. They have gone. On the bed they have left a tube of pink lipstick. There are towels lying around the bathroom. For the first time there is some disorder.

ROOM 24



Sunday, February 22, 11 A.M.
I go into Room 24, the pink room. The twin beds are unmade. Two pairs of flannelette pajamas, one red and one yellow, are tangled in a heap with the sheets. I find three suitcases. Two of them are empty. The third contains cosmetics and large amounts of pills and medicine. From the labels I learn that the owners, Mr and Mrs D, live in Geneva. The wardrobe and the chest of drawers are full. I'll look at them later. But I do notice a long black silk dress, a pair of woman's boots in light suede (in a tiny size, 34), and a pair of huge men's shoes.

In the bathroom, a pair of men's pants are drying on the shower rod; symbolic, they reflect

the tedium that prevails in this room. Unless it's just my own weariness. The sheet on the right-hand bed has a stain. I change it.

Monday 23, 11:15 A.M. Today it is the sheet on the left that is stained. I change it. I am running behind. I'll dig around tomorrow.

Tuesday 24, 1 P.M. They are still in their room as I leave work.

Wednesday 25. At half past noon, I go past the door of Room 24. I hear a man's coughs and a woman's voice. I go closer and listen:

Him: "What did you say?"

Her: "No, I want to see the museum near the post office."
He coughs.

Him: "I know there's a museum we still haven't seen."

Her: "A palace?"

Him: "No, it's a museum. Look under 'museum'."

Her: "I'm starting to become deformed."

Him: "Oh! The Museum of Modern Art!"

Her: "Modern art! Oh no, not modern art!"

In the end they reach an agreement. They will go to the Accademia gallery then they will see the campanile on Piazza San Marco. She adds: "Then there's something else I'd like to see: the glass blowing." The lift stops on the floor. I have to move away. At 1 P.M. they still haven't left the room.



Thursday 26, 9:30 A.M.

The floor waiter knocks on their door carrying a breakfast tray. He goes into the room. I catch sight of the couple, still half-asleep. The floor waiter goes and I stick my ear against the door to hear their first words. Silence, then she speaks: "What are we going to do today?"

Him: "The thing is, we need to set out earlier."

A noise in the stairwell forces me to move away. Five minutes later, the conversation has moved on.

Her: "So, at that moment you lose control, you lose your breath, and, somewhere, you give up. If use your diaphragm you can control your own contractions."

Him: "Yes," and he laughs.

Her: "When you want to push, you have to breathe in."

Judging by the sounds that reach me, he must be rehearsing the scene:

"And then suddenly the doctor

says you can push. Breathe in, breathe out, hold it, breathe. And it goes on like that ... Bring out the child's head. And then, hey, my little lady, we start again." He coughs and spits.

Him: "And then if the husband can be there

The conversation breaks off. One of them gets up and goes into the bathroom. Again this immediate feeling of boredom. I have to force myself to take an interest in them. On the left bedside table, a book: *I Gave Birth without Pain*, dirty handkerchiefs lie on the lower shelf of the one to the right. A dozen other handkerchiefs are piled up in a drawer. In the wardrobe, men's suits in grays and browns, and women's dresses in children's style in mauves and pinks. I note that the black evening dress is not silk but nylon. I hide in the bathroom and I use their products: Q-tips, *Balafre eau de toilette*, cream for chafed hands. I make their beds and leave the room.



Friday 27, noon. They have bought a poor-quality embroidered white smock. Nothing else to report.

Saturday 28, 1 P.M. They are still in their room. The "Do not disturb" sign hangs from the door handle.

Her: "Is my little honey, my little sweetie happy? Is my little sweetie happy with his mummy?"

Him: "Yessssssss."

I go. They tire me. I won't force myself today.

Sunday, March 1, 10 A.M. The room is empty. Gone at last. I air the room and change the sheets.

Room 24, March 2-5



Monday, March 2, 10:30 A.M. I go into Room 24, the pink one. The twin beds have been slept in. A strange feeling of *déjà vu* comes over me. Various images blend together. Days and clients all run together in my mind. Haven't I already visited these? The first things I notice are the books on the table: Alain Gerber's *La couleur orange* and a French Italian dictionary. In the closet: the usual clothes of an ordinary couple, photographic equipment in a camera case, an empty suitcase. The drawer is stuffed with handkerchiefs, medication for a deficient pancreas and Caporal Gauloises cigarettes.

I empty the handbag on the floor: sugar cubes, Tampax, pink lipstick, postal orders made out to Paulette B, old tickets for a Xenakis concert, and a diary. On the first page I read: "In the event of my death, everything I own will go to Mr François G exclusively", signed "Paulette B" in a childish, touching handwriting. Under the heading "Notes", the figure 23485.68, the address of a rest home in Versailles, a

sentence: "between the age of one year to eighteen months, the chamois is called an *éterlon*", plus a quote from Malraux I find hard to decipher. What I think I read is: "*C'est bien la première civilisation blanche mais aussi la façon étincelante d'un monde maori. Nous n'unissons pas sans peine à l'Iliade ni même à l'Odyssée ces cours ou ces premiers murs coiffés de plumes d'autruche, inclinant leurs lances devant des Phèdres aux seins offerts au-dessous d'un chaud bouillonnement de trilles. A Malraux, NRF, 1954, page 93.*"

On the agenda are the following notes: "1.30 unemployment office, 2.6 *l'heure du loup*, 2.10 unemployment office, text of ver-l'ict, 2.14 unemployment office, 2.20 unemployment office." Further on is a list of expenses, in particular for the trip to Venice: "Departure 200000 L or 3450 F (2.28 petrol 270, meal 45, highway toll 103. 3.1: tunnel 56, cap Venice 400, taxi 90, meal 300)." In the bag is also the reservation at the Hotel C until March 6, a customer's receipt from a cleaner in

Bordeaux, a blue paper in the name of Paulette B, born May 1, 1936: it is a *baccalauréat* diploma, *série moderne*, dated July 1956. Nine voter registration cards, all out of date, for the years 1961 to 1980. A letter sent from Mexico to Paulette B in 1972, which reads (in French): "News at last from your American cousin. I'm beginning to get used to things. What's good about this country is building something new, from scratch ... [he goes on about the wild animals, local folklore, the creation of a cooperative]. ... What families would need when they get there is pigs, cows, goats, hens, bananas, oranges, lemons, grapefruits, pineapples ... and we think that by 1976, the first farmers will be able to come over and work for themselves. Best regards, Albert."

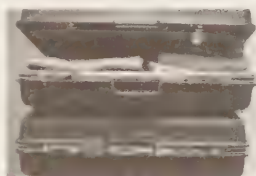
Then there is a postcard mailed the same year: "As you can see, we've opted for Italy this year for three weeks. It is stiflingly hot in Florence. We've done a thorough job of visiting this lovely city and we're now about to go and cool off in the Alps. Best regards, Monique V."

That was nine years ago. On the floor are two suitcases, one on top of the other. One of them is spilling over with clothes. I've had enough, I don't go through it. The other is locked. It belongs to a certain G, a seafaring captain who lives in Versailles. It is heavy and full.

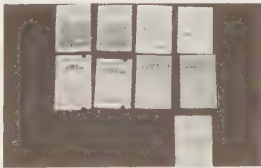
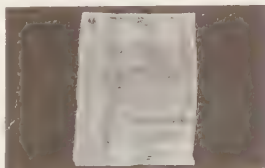
Tuesday 3. 10:20 A.M. On the table is Gerber's book open on page 37. Beside it are two other books: the *Guide Michelin Italie* and a bound book called *Intimité de Venise*. A red flannelette

nightgown is in the bathroom
Time is short. The suitcase is still
locked. I don't want to linger.

Wednesday 4, 11 A.M. Nothing
seems to have changed in the
room. Everything is in the same
place. I head straight for the hand-
bag. In it I find two passports.
One is in the name of Paulette B.
secretary, French nationality, five
feet three inches, born May 1,
1936, green eyes, home address
Bordeaux, and a single stamp for
entry into Malaga in 1976. The
other is in the name of François
G, French nationality, born
January 4, 1910, blue eyes, five
feet seven inches, home address
Versailles, same stamp for
Malaga. Inside Paulette's
passport are six passport
photographs (herself, I imagine,
from childhood to adulthood)
In the bottom of the handbag
I find a small key. It opens the
suitcase, where I glimpse men's
clothes and a book by Jean
d'Ormesson, *Au plaisir de dieu*.
I close it very quickly, I am afraid
I put the key back in the handbag
and straighten up the room



Thursday 5, 11:30 A.M. They
have been to see *Idomeneo* at the
Venice Theater (I see the tickets
in the wastebasket). The bed is
full of crumbs, and a geometric
sign on the bedsheets catches
my eye. The little black scarf is
still hanging in the wardrobe.
Tomorrow they'll be gone.





Tuesday 24, 9:45 A.M. I go into Room 30. The twin beds are unmade. A general disorder in the room, clothes are flung here and there: a pair of jeans, a suede jacket, etc.. On the right-hand bedside table: maps of Venice, an alarm clock, a book, *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* by Michel Tournier, an appointment book. I flip through it. For February 28, they have noted: "Return". For April 7: "Leave". On the "Notes" page: "See the Ghetto". The other pages are blank. The person on the left was smoking a cigar. On the bedside table, *Mishima* by Marguerite Yourcenar, a Minolta camera, and, in the drawer, an appointment book filled with notes. I'll look at this later.

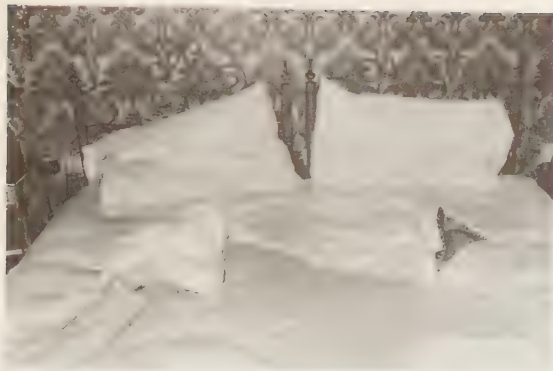
In the wardrobe, a man's clothes: three pairs of trousers, four ties, two sweaters, a blue velvet suit. For the woman: a red

dress, a gray skirt. The drawers are also full: socks, stockings, bras... very well equipped. Under the sweaters is a small, black, embroidered handbag. It contains 545 French francs, a dog-eared telegram, and a letter, a love letter. It is signed "Fabrice": "Wednesday evening. Dear Patricia: All of your little things plus a little sum of money in the wallet. The evening feels like paradise lost but I still feel happy because I have hope because you understand better than me what love is, what it entails. It's really a woman's business and I feel pretty clumsy about it all. This doesn't really count as a letter, I'll write you later. I love you, Patricia, and tell myself more and more how lucky I am to have found a woman like you. I kiss you very tenderly because you love it when I do that and so do I."

The telegram "What is going on darling?" had been sent from Chicago and addressed to Patricia M. Paris, 11th arrondissement. It is signed by the same and dated October 25, 1965.

In the bathroom, on the edge of the basin, there are two toilet bags, still full; one marked with the initials PM, and in the bath, a pair of dirty panties and a sanitary towel spotted with blood.

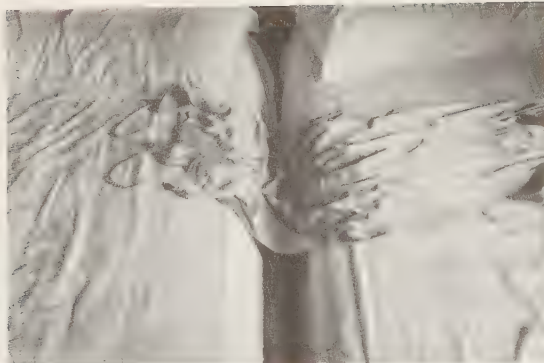
Wednesday 25, 10:20 A.M. On the bed, a newspaper, *Le Figaro*. Unusually, there are no pajamas. They have bought three nylon wigs and a pair of black mustaches for the carnival. On the table I find these few handwritten lines on a bit of paper: "He had remembered that look for you could not forget it." Not much work today. I sit on their bed and flip through the



diary I glimpsed the day before. It belongs to Patricia M, a resident of the Paris suburbs and mother of two children: Anne, born in 1971, and François, born in 1974. Patricia belongs to a sports club, plays tennis, and is studying English. Her blood donor's card says: Rhesus + O. She was given an intravenous injection of 85 µg of anti-D immunoglobulin on 16.8.80. As for her engagements: February 1: Antoine's wedding, bridge + dessert. February 3: Firemen. February 7: Anne at Maximilien's, Cub Scouts meeting, Brownies meeting. March 14: Cub Scouts meeting, Josselyn's wedding at 4 P.M. March 18: François. Coffee with the family. March 24: parish hall. March 27: Germaine Colas. 8:45 P.M.: CPM Donady team meeting. March 28: Brownies meeting. March 29: Cub Scouts outing. April 7: vacation. For the next few days, there are also plans to go to the library with Gérard on May 11, on the 16th to the school party, and on June 19 there's the "meeting at home".

Between the pages of the diary, I find a second letter. I read it: "My dear child, I am surprised not to have heard from you more often. I would love to know how you are. As for me, I am as well as can be expected. On March 5, I am going to the Senior Citizens Congress near Alès. There will be 5000 members from the Gard area. I also spent fifteen marvelous days in Rémusant, in the Drôme. Christmas day was brilliant. We had beautiful sunshine with an occasional drop of rain and went out to collect pine cones. Every day, I go for a good healthy walk on the hill. I'm still holding onto life and I hope to be able to write to you for a long time yet without rambling on. If you could see my courtyard in bloom you would be amazed: three camomiles as white as snow, six feet across, five or six pots of bright blue Carpathian campanula; the trailing geraniums, pink, red, mauve, and bright blue, have climbed up to the top of the palm tree, as have the nasturtiums. All this is incredibly colorful...





"I also wanted to tell you that Françoise's friend, the writer, Jeanne G, has died at ninety-four. Françoise says that Jeanne was messy. It's un—believable, at her house they found forty umbrellas, seventeen overcoats, five or six furs, bundles of 10000-franc notes dating from 1914 to 1918. Quite a character. My dear, I enclose these lines with my letter. They're by Eliane Victor, the radio announcer, who recommends the MLF [Woman's Liberation Movement]. You should get yourself introduced there, get your foot in the door of a place where you could find a good, lucrative position. You don't push hard enough

"I think I'll go to the nursing home soon. It might be fun. The sky would be the same as at home and the gardens are pleasant. The Bible says: 'Consider all things and take what is good.'

"I can't wait to see you. I hope that you soon tire of your travels. Valentine sends you hugs and kisses."

In the bathroom, I cover up the dirty underwear hanging from the bidet with a towel.

Thursday 26, 10:20 A.M.
I'm in the hallway when the door of Room 30 opens. The occupant, a man, fortyish, solidly built, with brown hair and a mustache, wearing a short bathrobe in terry cloth, holds his breakfast tray out to me and gives me a nice smile before closing the door of his room. Fabrice in the flesh? For the first time, I imagine for a few seconds a patron taking an interest in my plight as a chambermaid and telling me to drop everything and go away with him, to Paris perhaps. I notice that they drank the tea but ate nothing.

At 11:20 A.M. the couple leaves the room. I go in. An elegant nightshirt that I had not seen before is thrown across the two unmade beds like a bridge. The jeans are still in the same place over the back of the chair. They have bought a lot of postcards of paintings by Bellini, Veronese ... as well as a little embroidered cotton blouse for a child. I re-read the love letter and clean the room.

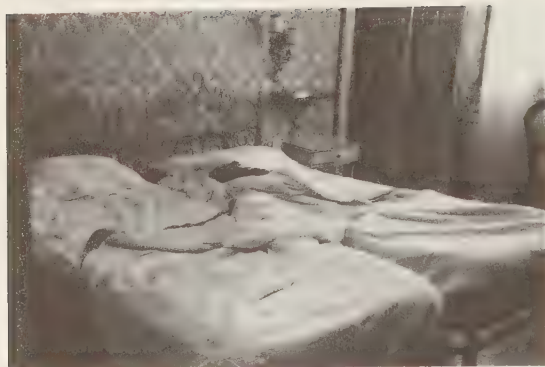
Friday 27, 10:20 A.M.
The suitcases of Room 30 have been put out in the hallway. They are leaving. I walk past them carrying my brooms and my pail. The man stops me; he says, "Thank you, this is from the whole floor," takes my hand and slips 33.50 francs into it.

Room 30, March 4



Wednesday, March 4, 11:20 A.M.
I go into Room 30. Only one bed has been slept in, the one on the right. There is a small bag on the luggage stand. A beautifully ironed silk nightgown lies on the chair that has been pulled up near the bed: it clearly has never been worn. Everything else is still in the traveling bag. All I find in it is men's clothing: gray trousers, a gray striped shirt, a pair of socks, a toilet bag (razor, shaving cream, comb, aftershave lotion) a dog-eared photograph of a group of young people surrounding an older woman, a passport in the name of ML, male sex, Italian nationality, born in 1946 in Rome, his place of residence, five feet seven inches, blue eyes. The bathroom is empty, so is the wardrobe, but in the drawer of the night table I find: a box of Panter cigars, a fountain pen, airmail stationery, a leather box with the initials "ML", on a piece of paper is the address of a Mr and Mrs B in Florence, a wallet with five identical photographs of a blonde woman, and a wedding photograph showing the man in the passport in an evening suit and the blonde woman in a wedding gown. There is also an old bill from the Hotel C, dated March 4, 1979, in the name of Mr and Mrs L for the same room, number 30. Exactly two years ago, ML spent the night in the Hotel C with his wife.

He has come back alone. With the embroidered nightgown in his suitcase. His reservation was last night only. He is leaving today. I'll do the room later.



Thursday, March 5, 10 A.M. I go into Room 30. The twin beds are unmade. On the luggage stand is a red suitcase, half-open; inside, a heap of clothes that I don't touch. On top are men's pajamas, brown flannelette, some hair curlers, a scarf, a woolen bonnet. I open the wardrobe: men's and women's clothing, among which is a black nylon nightgown. In the bathroom, a big load of laundry is drying on the rail of the shower curtain. The toiletries and make-up are still in an overnight case. A name is printed on it: "Mrs John D". She lives in Boulder, Colorado. A little case filled with fake pearls has been set on the soap dish.

I go back into the bedroom. On the table, some Marlboros, a book, *American Women's Club in Denmark*. Some of the names are underlined in red. There's also an almost empty glass (I take a sip: it's Coca-Cola), an address book, nine postcards of Venice. They haven't been addressed yet. Here's what they say:

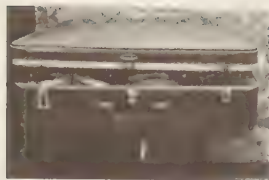
"Dear Anna and John: We said hello to your friends in the

leather shop and George bought your gloves at the glove shop but we didn't find the shop that sells red pajamas. The trip has been great. See you soon. Liz."

"My dear friends: We are having a wonderful trip and the H's are fun companions. We had good weather in Germany, rain in Switzerland and Florence. Now we are in the sun, in Venice, to make it even more beautiful. Next stop is Vienna. Goodbye. Liz."

"The goodies arrived. The stockings are great, thank you very much, my dear Christina and Oliver and Bob. We are having a wonderful trip. Everything is beautiful with the sun shining, which makes the water sparkle. Our friends have been charming traveling companions. Next stop will be Vienna. I bought Italian boots and a Pierrot ... Love."

"The Christmas nuts arrived. We ate the whole thing. Delicious. Thank you, dear Bernard and Monique. We are having a great trip with your friends. We have been to Germany, Switzerland, Florence,



and now Venice. It rained in Florence but we have sun in Venice to make it even more beautiful. Our next stop is Vienna. Liz."

"Dear Ruth: We are having a wonderful trip through Europe with friends. Now we are in beautiful Venice. Next we go to Vienna. I love seeing these places. Love, Liz."

"Dear Francis: Dad loves the Alfa-Romeo Bar. We drove by the factory. We are in magical Venice with sunshine to make the water sparkle. Next stop will be Vienna. Much love, Mom and Dad."

"Dear Johanna: It's a really beautiful cathedral and Florence is still medieval. Now we are in Venice near the highly ornate St Mark's. I wish you could visit the churches of Europe. Love, Liz."

"Dear Deborah and Jennifer: We have been to Germany, Switzerland, Florence, and now Venice. I hope Jennifer will visit all the beautiful places when she is grown up. Next stop will be Vienna, where we'll hear the boys' choir. Love, Liz."

"Dear Emily: Now we are in beautiful Venice with the sun shining to make the water sparkle. We hope to see you soon at the end of the month. Love, Liz."

And as I read Liz's letters, the rain continues to come down. It hasn't stopped for three days. I make the bed.

Friday 6, 9:30 A.M. Signs of departure: their things have been tidied up, the bathroom is empty. In the wardrobe there's still a skirt in its garment bag. On the chair in a plastic bag is a selection of objects to be kept to hand: an umbrella, two pairs of boots, a pair of men's underpants, a bottle of Martini Bianco, a flask of Johnny Walker.

ROOM 12



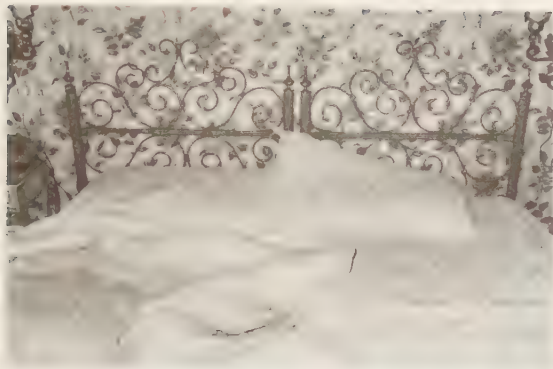
Wednesday 25, noon.

The first-floor chambermaid is ill and the hotel management has asked me to do Room 12. I go in. Both twin beds have been slept in. For the first time, I find an unusual kind of order about the room and its various objects: a brass candlestick and portraits in fancy frames. The occupants' dirty clothes (mostly underwear) have been stowed away in the two suitcases, which are under the bed with their shoes, and there is food in the forms of carrots and oranges on the windowsill outside. In the table drawer I find plates, forks, and knives. I glance at the clothes in the wardrobe: white, mostly starched shirts with pleated fronts, two dinner jackets, ties, and white silk scarves, a glamorous collection of evening clothes. No feminine garments.

In the bathroom, the toiletries have been put out with equal care. There are two razors. On the table in the room: three framed photographs—a man in military uniform, a couple in their fifties, and a woman—a bottle of Halston *eau de toilette*, keys, various bottles, two pears. On the night table on the right, a book, Freud's *Totems und Tabu*. On the left, a color photograph has been slipped underneath the glass tabletop: it shows a woman lying on a sofa, looking up at a man standing behind her. I open the drawer and find a book by Paul G r aldy. It is called *Toi et Moi* and starts with the following line: "If you loved me and I loved you, how I would love you ...". On the shelf underneath is an unusual number of books in German: Hermann Hesse, Rilke, Thomas Mann,

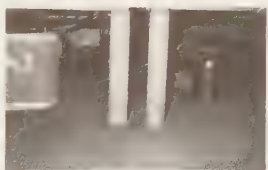
etc.. Among the books is a diary also in German, dating from 2.24.81. I cannot make head or tail of it, except for the title, which is in Spanish, *Diario del viaje a Venezia*, and the words: "Hotel C *parlent Fran ais*", plus a diagram of Room 12. Hidden behind the books I find some foot cream. In a pocket of one of the two dinner jackets, I also find a wallet. Inside it are papers bearing the name Christian K, born in 1958 in Vienna, which is where he lives: identity card, student card, driver's license, credit card, a card with blood type. A photograph of a woman (perhaps the one on the sofa). A sheet of paper with a few figures ("24: 20950; 25: 75.900, 26:66:500 ..."), an identity card in the name of Walter K, born in 1957 (same name and address as Christian K).

Room 12, February 25-27



Thursday 26, 12:15 P.M.

Today the room is a mess:
rumpled suits, white shirts, and
ties are hanging over the chair
There is bread in the wastebasket
The plates in the drawers are
dirty. They have bought more
food: tomatoes, ham, two kinds
of cheese, bread, a bottle of
water, two bottles of wine
Their diary is gone



Friday 27, 11 A.M. They have
left. In the bathroom I find the
toothbrush glasses broken,
the wastebasket in the bathtub,
and a blue paper with the
words "Orlon socks, size 39/44,
6.80 francs"





Saturday, February 28, 11 A.M. I go into Room 26. I go straight to what catches my eye: a pair of black pumps stuffed with paper. The twin beds are unmade. There are flannelette pajamas laid across the pillows; the pair on the right is green with white piping; the pair on the left, red with blue piping. On the left-hand bedside table, a pair of glasses, a teddy bear, and a nail kit. In the drawer of the one on the right, three pornographic magazines: *Tenera Notte*, *Caballo*, and *Super*. I open the wardrobe. I find an embroidered lady's twinset. In the drawers: three blouses, three sweaters, a pair of trousers. No men's clothing. In the bathroom, two toilet bags each containing cosmetics and make-up. I open the traveling bag. I find a carton of Marlboros,

a large number of light-blue panties, a scarf and a leather folder with a passport inside in the name of Anna L (chestnut hair, 1.53 m, born in Milan in 1956, naturalized Swiss citizen), and a document also in the name of Anna L confirming the length of her professional leave. Thus I learn that she is a truck driver. I also discover that she is taking life-saving courses and that she drives a Lancia Fulvia.

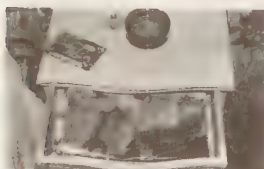
Stuffed in the pockets of the suitcase, a bundle of hankies and newspaper and some documents: tickets from the "Tombola Moderna", an ID card in the name of Carla P (Italian, saleswoman, resident of Padua). A wedding photo (the bride is Anna L; the groom is bearded and wears glasses) and a series of photographs

showing three women fishing; I recognize Carla and Anna.

Sunday, March 1, 11:10 A.M. Apparently no noteworthy changes in the bedroom. The pajamas are in their respective places. The red pair on the left, the green pair on the right. Opening the drawer of the bedside table, I see that the porno magazines have been moved. Now *Tenera Notte* is on top of the pile. The cleaning is finished, so I, in turn, leaf through their pages.

Monday 2, 10 A.M. They have gone. On the left-hand bedside table, two glasses; on the right-hand one, two bottles of Coca-Cola. They left their magazines in the wastebasket, as a souvenir of their stay.

Room 26, February 28 March 1





Saturday February 28, 9:45 A.M. I go into Room 43. The double bed is unmade. Clothes are spilling out of the two suitcases piled on the luggage stand. I open them and search through them. The one on top, the man's, contains good-quality suits, some shirts, hand-knit Shetland sweaters, sandals with wood soles. Underneath, in the woman's, clothing in a younger style, with more colorful, thick sweaters in soft colors. On the two suitcases, a red-and-blue striped nightgown and light-blue pajamas with navy-blue trim, in traditional fleecy cotton. In the drawer of the left-hand bedside table, I am delighted to find chocolates. I count: there are twenty-five of them. On a chair, there is a little blue package, unopened. I feel it. It could contain biscuits. I go into the bathroom and notice

two absolutely identical toothbrushes, with blue bristles.

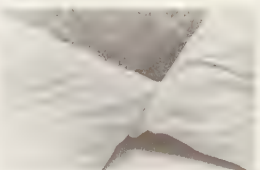
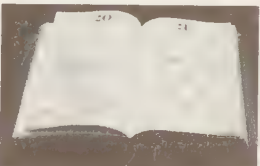
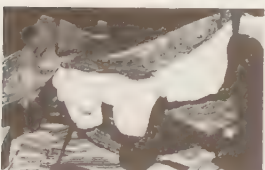
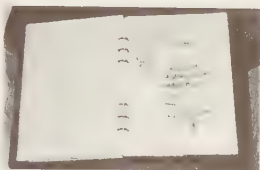
Sunday March 1, 10:45 A.M. The drawer. The chocolates. They haven't touched them. I take one. The room is fairly untidy. In the bathroom the toweling rug has been put on top of the rubber shower mat. It's soaked. In the wastebasket I find a pregnancy test which I am unable to decipher. At the foot of the bed there is a briefcase I didn't notice yesterday containing a small jewelry box (with two pink pills inside), handkerchiefs, a brown leather wallet, and two diaries. In the wallet I find an ID photo of a man (he looks like a convict), a small printed image representing two mountains and a ravine, with these words by Claudel over the top: "*Da una riva al altra del mondo, non c'è stra-*

da per me che attraverso la pace."

In the first diary, for the dates January 20 and 21, two sketches. The other pages are blank apart from the words "*Te amo Emmanuella. Marco*" written here and there.

In the thick black notebook belonging to Emmanuella C, Milan, the first thing is a typed list recording the numbers of her various ID papers (I learn that she has a Mercedes). Then come phone numbers: psychoanalyst, nurse, Red Cross, Green Cross, urban security, police, ambulance, the Relais-Christine hotel in Paris. The only personal numbers are those of six members of her family, the Cs.

Under the heading "agencies for domestic help" there are fifteen phone numbers, under the heading "waiters" six numbers, including one "waiter for buffets". I also find



the phone number of one Vanni G "*per procurare musici e cantanti*" (for musicians and singers).

The last page has a list of guests for Thursday 26: a dozen names, some of them followed by a confirmatory "si". An incomplete plan shows an attempt to place the guests around the table.

Monday 2, noon. A real mess. Clothes spill out of the suitcase, now placed on the bed, pajamas are left lying about, the blue packet is open and the cream cakes are getting dry. The only image of calm is the two pillows leaning against one another. I spend a lot of time tidying up the room and

have none left to root around. I count the chocolates again and realize that I'm the only one who appreciates them. I take two.

Tuesday 3, 11 A.M. I go in. Gone is the jumble I was already getting used to. They have left. The only signs of their presence here, the stale cakes and a newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*.

Thursday, March 5, 10:15 A.M. I go into Room 43. The big bed is unmade. On the left, they are reading *Regain* by Giono, *La maison du péril* by Agatha Christie, and the newspaper *Le Monde*. On the right, *Le Nouvel Observateur*. I open the wardrobe: an impressive quantity of clothing. For example, six suits for the man, and twelve silk blouses for the woman. Ties, bow ties, jewelry, and veils are piled in the drawers as well as a vibrator in a plastic case. I take it out to photograph it on the carpet. The suitcase set on the luggage stand is empty, but tucked in the inside pocket are two photocopies of newspaper articles and an Hermès address book. The first of the two documents is taken from the *Quotidien de Paris* and is titled: "Indiscreet Journey into the France of the Privileged Few". The journalist explains how to proceed in order to attract future voters and as an example describes how the current minister for the post office and telecommunications gives away free gasoline coupons to his supporters. As for the second article, its title is "A Ministry Made of Gold"; the following is an extract: "the Secretary of State of the PTT,

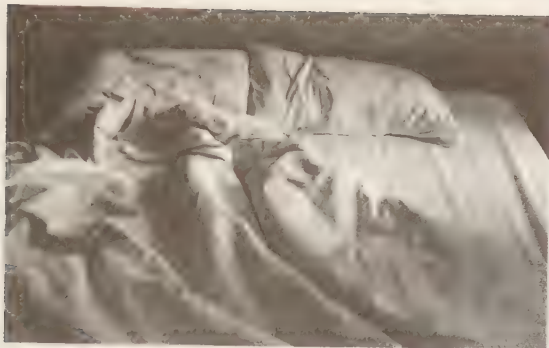
undoubtedly one of the richest administrations in which people from the same world practice policies of expenses claims and gasoline coupons, all of which are direct ways of making life a lot more comfortable ...".

I flip through the address book. In case of loss, please return to Mr V, who lives in the 7th arrondissement in Paris and holds, in fact, an important seat in the Ministry of Telecommunications. On the "Notes" page of the address book, these two words: "Monsieur Lapin". I don't have enough time and I don't want to finish going through everything today. I give up my reading. I clean the room, and leave. The man's shoes have been set outside in front of the door. A strange atmosphere of silence hangs over the hotel.

Friday 6, 8:45 A.M. I go straight to the suitcase where I find the diary I flicked through yesterday. I settle down to read it. I am alerted by noises in the stairwell. I just have time to throw the book into the case. A key turns in the lock. A woman comes in, smiles at me, apologizes for interrupting my cleaning. I say nothing, lower my eyes, and go. Leaving the suitcase wide open. Ten minutes later the floor waiter asks me to wait for Room 43 because the occupants have suddenly decided to leave. Did I play a part in causing this departure?

11 A.M. The room is empty. Their bulky luggage stands waiting for them. They have left nothing behind. In two hours I will follow them. It is my last day at the hotel.

Room 43, March 5 -6





Thursday, February 19, 10:45 A.M. I go into Room 29. The twin beds have been slept in. The brown suitcase on the floor contains men's clothes, the white one on the luggage rack some women's outfits. A fur coat is hanging in the wardrobe. In a plastic bag, there is a pair of new women's boots, a roll of toilet paper, and a shoe-horn. On the table, I find some Players cigarettes, a pipe, a guide to Italy in French, a bag. The bag contains a whistle, a book. *Les philosophes taoïstes*, in the Pléiade edition, a flashlight, an identity card in the name of Sébastien P. of Moroccan nationality, born in February 1941, height 5'5", occupation: shopkeeper, living in the 14th arrondissement. (On the identity card, I notice that he is handsome.) A passport in the name of Elisabeth C. born

in March 1930, 5'5", a shopkeeper as well. She also lives in the 14th arrondissement but not on the same street. She is blonde, tanned, with a lot of make-up. In an inside pocket of the bag, I find a pack of advertising cards with the name of a Parisian café. The owner: Elisabeth C.

Friday 20, 11 A.M. The left pillow is stained. She drools a little bit at night. They have washed a few clothes: some socks and a pair of brown underpants. On the left bedside table, many more items than yesterday: some socks, suppositories, and an ointment for hemorrhoids. Nothing has changed otherwise.

Saturday 21, 11:30 A.M. Inside the room there is a strong pipe tobacco smell. They had break-

fast in bed. Coffee only. They have bought some new medicine including some citrosidina, good for the digestion. I place them together to take a photograph.

Sunday 22, 9:45 A.M. Passing in front of their door, I hear them shouting.

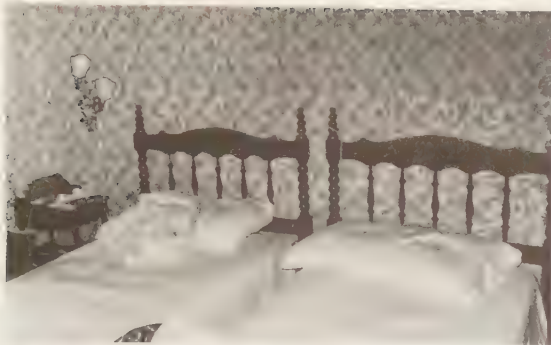
He says, "It's not so much that I don't know where to live that bothers me. The problem with Paris is that I don't have a place to work."

She replies, "But do you like the flat?"

"I like it if I can move in!"

"Well, we can take it for six months and then buy it. I'm going to get my ass moving, believe me. You have to have a place of your own."

She adds after a silence: "The flat was a pain because



of the concierge, and everybody, all these creeps."

He does not answer.

"You don't seem happy!"

He says, exasperated, "But of course I'm happy."

She replies kindly, "Look, I'm the first person who wants to buy

you this studio but we've got to be there on the spot ... does that make any sense? You're never pleased. I'm the first one who wants to make you happy ..."

"But this is ridiculous!" he shouts. "All right! Let me be the way I want."

One of them gets up, goes to the bathroom, turn on the shower. She says, "It makes sense, doesn't it? Are we going to buy it?"

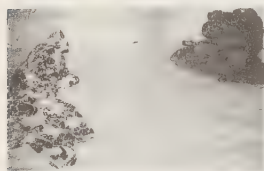
He does not answer or does not hear. The shower is still running. Five minutes elapse. They keep silent. I leave my post to go and make up Room 47. When I come back, they have gone. Still the same tobacco smell. They are going to leave. The suitcases are ready. In the wastebasket, there are some empty foot-cream boxes

(antiseptic cream for the feet) and some Anusol suppositories. Also a crumpled letter. I smooth it out and read it: "It was sent to me. I am sending it to you. It came from Venezuela, was written by a legionnaire. This chain letter must go around the world. Even if you are not superstitious, mind what follows.

Mr Frof received the chain letter in 1969, made twenty-four copies of it, and sent them on. Three days later, he won three million in the National Lottery. Mr Bernard received it in 1969, had it xeroxed by his secretary, and sent out the copies. He saw his social status improve rapidly. Mr Roland received the letter, read it, and burnt it. His wife and three children were killed one night at their home in a fire. Mr Petit forgot it in a drawer, lost his job. He found it again and obtained a better job than the previous one. In no case should this chain letter be broken. Make twenty-four copies of it and send them. Within nine days something will happen to you. Sincerely,"

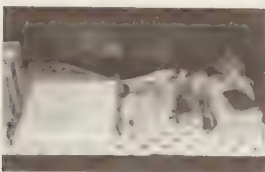
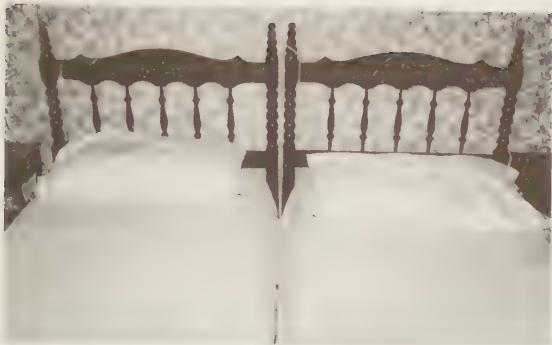
Well, they threw it away.

Room 29, February 28–March 1



Saturday, February 28, 10:15 A.M. I go into Room 29. The twin beds have been slept in. On the table, some leftovers on a plate, two glasses, a bottle of water, some Diana cigarette butts in the ashtray. It seems to me at first that the room has been vacated. Then I notice a pair of tennis shoes sticking out from under the wardrobe and a white cap with a Sergio label hanging on the coatrack. In the bathroom, two toothbrushes: a new, red one still in its wrapping, the other, yellow, in a blue plastic case; Italian toothpaste, a big white sponge. Nothing else. I open the wardrobe. Inside I find a large closed suitcase, a handbag, a small suitcase, a plastic bag containing two pairs of slippers (sizes 36 and 41), two yellow sweaters, and lying on the suitcase a small hardcover notebook with the inscription: "*Ricordo matrimonio*" (wedding souvenir). I leaf through it, very moved: C.S. born in Pisa in 1958, and F.C. born in Pisa in 1957, were married on February 26, 1981, at eleven o'clock in Casciavolla. My first couple on a honeymoon. In the handbag I find some cigarettes and a white handkerchief; in the small suitcase, a large white sheet, a pair of white panties, a white embroidered slip, a pair of black socks. I clean the room, make the bed. Lifting the sheets, I find their pajamas, a white pair with small red-and-blue flowers, the other in blue flannelette, and a long black hair.

Sunday, March 1, 9:30 A.M. They have gone. I clean up the room.



Friday 6, 9 A.M. I go into Room 29. It seems vacant. The twin beds have not been used. The only sign of presence: the suitcase placed on the luggage rack. It is empty. A more careful examination reveals that the right bed has been occupied (a few short black hairs and a creased pillow) though without being unmade. In the bathroom, the first thing that I notice is the glass of water in which a handkerchief is soaking. On the edge of the sink, there is a small transparent toilet kit; it contains a rosehip soap still in the package, some tissue paper, a thermo-meter, a toothbrush (but no toothpaste), a knife, two small cases of Elephant and Power toilet water, a tooth mirror, and two towels placed over the hotel ones. I go back to the room and open the wardrobe. No clothes hanging, but the shelf holds a

large number of miscellaneous objects which I place on the bed to photograph them better: a transparent case full of medicines and syringes; a cardboard box sealed with Scotch tape (I lift it. It is light. I am unable to guess its contents); a hammer and the following series of items, each obsessively separated in a plastic bag: a SCNF (French railways) bed sheet, a sponge, some silverware, two clothes brushes, a sewing kit, one glove, and a cloth.

Inside the opaque plastic bag, there are some products for cleaning wood and aluminum, and a can of mosquito spray. Everything is ordered, wrapped up, sterilized. No cleaning to do here except for the necessary tidying up after my own search. It is my last day at the Hotel C. I leave the guest of Room 29 to the real chambermaid.



On Friday, March 6, 1981, at 1 A.M., my duties at the Hotel C come to an end.





THE ADDRESS BOOK

In the summer of 1985, a French newspaper before I had found an address book - I decided back anonymously to its owner, whose address those people whose names were noted down. Thus I would get to know this man through discovery who he was without ever meeting him, in an uncertain length of time, that would depend on him and on the turn taken by events.

on a trip to New Orleans with his girlfriend. Maria would go there as well, she decided, and follow him around with her camera for the entire length of his visit. She had absolutely no interest in him, and the last thing she was looking for was an amorous adventure. Her intention was to keep herself hidden, to resist all contact with him, to explore his outward behavior and make no effort to interpret what she saw. The next morning, she caught a flight from LaGuardia to New Orleans, checked into a hotel, and bought herself a black wig. For three days she made inquiries at dozens of hotels, trying to track down the man's whereabouts. She discovered him at last, and for the rest of the week she walked behind him like a shadow, taking hundreds of photographs, documenting every place he went to. She kept a written diary as well, and when the time came for him to go back to New York, she returned on an earlier flight - in order to be waiting at the airport for a last sequence of pictures as he stepped off the plane. It was a complex and disturbing experience for her, and it left her feeling that she had abandoned her life for a kind of nothingness, as though she had been taking pictures of things that weren't there. The camera was no longer an instrument that recorded presences, it was a way of making the world disappear, a technique for encountering the invisible. Desperate to undo the process she had set in motion, Maria launched into a new project just days after returning to New York. Walking through Times Square with her camera one afternoon, she got into a conversation with the doorman of a topless go-go bar. The weather was warm, and Maria was dressed in shorts and a T-shirt, an unusually skimpy outfit for her. But she had gone out that day in order to be noticed. She wanted to affirm the reality of her body, to make heads turn, to prove to herself that she still existed in the eyes of others. Maria was well put together, with long legs and attractive breasts, and the whistles and lewd remarks she received that day helped to revive her spirits. The doorman told her that she was a pretty girl, just as pretty as the girls inside, and as their conversation continued, she suddenly found herself being offered a job. One of the dancers had called in sick, he said,

and if she wanted to fill in for her, he'd introduce her to the boss and see if something couldn't be worked out. Scarcely pausing to think about it, Maria accepted. That was how her next work came into being, a piece that eventually came to be known as *The Naked Lady*. Maria asked a friend to come along that night and take pictures of her as she performed - not to show anyone, but for herself, in order to satisfy her own curiosity about what she looked like. She was consciously turning herself into an object, a nameless figure of desire, and it was crucial to her that she understand precisely what that object was. She only did it that once, working in twenty-minute shifts from eight o'clock in the evening until two in the morning, but she didn't hold back, and the whole time she was on stage, perched behind the bar with colored strobe lights bouncing off her bare skin, she danced her heart out. Dressed in a rhinestone G-string and a pair of two-inch heels, she shook her body to loud rock and roll and watched the men stare at her. She wiggled her ass at them, she ran her tongue over her lips, she winked seductively as they slipped her dollar bills and urged her on. As with everything else she tried, Maria was good at it. Once she got herself going, there was hardly any stopping her.

As far as I know, she went too far only once. That was in the spring of 1976, and the ultimate effects of her miscalculation proved to be catastrophic. At least two lives were lost, and even though it took years for that to happen, the connection between the past and the present is inescapable. Maria was the link between Sachs and Lillian Stern, and if not for Maria's habit of courting trouble in whatever form she could find it, Lillian Stern never would have entered the picture. After Maria turned up at Sachs's apartment in 1979, a meeting between Sachs and Lillian Stern became possible. It took several more unlikely twists before that possibility was realized, but each of them can be traced directly back to Maria. Long before any of us knew her, she went out one morning to buy film for her camera, saw a little black address book lying on the ground, and picked it up. That was the event that started the whole miserable story. Maria opened the

ed me to write a series of articles. Not long
photocopy the contents before sending it
as given on the endpaper. I then contacted
and asked them to tell me about the owner,
friends, his acquaintances. I would try to
and to produce a portrait of him, over and
the willingness of his friends to talk about

book, and out flew the devil, out flew a scourge of violence
mayhem, and death.

It was one of those standard little address books manufactured
by the Schaeffer Easton Company, about six inches tall and four
inches across, with a flexible imitation leather cover, spiral
binding, and thumb tabs for each letter of the alphabet. It was a
well-worn object, filled with over two hundred names,
addresses, and telephone numbers. The fact that many of the
entries had been crossed out and rewritten, that a variety of
writing instruments had been used on almost every page (blue
ballpoints, black felt tips, green pencils) suggested that it had
belonged to the owner for a long time. Maria's first thought was
to return it, but as is often the case with personal property, the
owner had neglected to write his name in the book. She searched
in all the logical places - the inside front cover, the first page, the
back - but no name was to be found. Not knowing what to do
with it after that, she dropped the book into her bag and carried it
home.

Most people would have forgotten about it, I think, but Maria
wasn't one to shy away from unexpected opportunities, to ignore
the promptings of chance. By the time she went to bed that night,
she had already come up with a plan for her next project. It would
be an elaborate piece, much more difficult and complicated than
anything she had attempted before, but the sheer scope of it
threw her into a state of intense excitement. She was almost
certain that the owner of the address book was a man. The
handwriting had a masculine look to it; there were more listings
for men than for women; the book was in ragged condition, as if it
had been treated roughly. In one of those sudden, ridiculous
flashes that everyone is prey to, she imagined that she was
destined to fall in love with the owner of the book. It lasted only a
second or two, but in that time she saw him as the man of her
dreams: beautiful, intelligent, warm; a better man than she had
ever loved before. The vision dispersed, but by then it was
already too late. The book had been transformed into a magical
object for her, a storehouse of obscure passions and unarticulated

desires. Chance had led her to it, but now that it was hers, she
saw it as an instrument of fate.

She studied the entries that first evening and found no names
that were familiar to her. That was the perfect starting point, she
felt. She would set out in the dark, knowing absolutely nothing,
and one by one she would talk to all the people listed in the book.
By finding out who they were, she would begin to learn something
about the man who had lost it. It would be a portrait on
absentia, an outline drawn around an empty space, and little by
little a figure would emerge from the background, pieced
together from everything he was not. She hoped that she would
eventually track him down that way, but even if she didn't, the
effort would be its own reward. She wanted to encourage people
to open up to her when she saw them, to tell her stories about
enchantment and lust and falling in love, to confide their deepest
secrets in her. She fully expected to work on these interviews for
months, perhaps even for years. There would be thousands of
photographs to take, hundreds of statements to transcribe, an
entire universe to explore. Or so she thought. As it happened, the
project was derailed after just one day.

With only one exception, every person in the book was listed
under his or her last name. In among the Ls, however, there was
an entry for someone named Lilli. Maria assumed it was a
woman's first name. If that were so, then this unique departure
from the directory style could have been significant, a sign of
some special intimacy. What if Lilli was the girlfriend of the man
who had lost the address book? Or his sister, or even his mother?
Rather than go through the names in alphabetical order as she
had originally planned, Maria decided to jump ahead to L and
pay a call on the mysterious Lilli first. If her hunch was correct,
she might suddenly find herself in a position to learn who the

BRADY TERRY

She couldn't approach Lilli directly. Too much hinged on the
meeting, and she was afraid of destroying her chances by blun-
dering into it unprepared. She had to get a sense of who this
woman was before she talked to her, to see what she looked like.



In this thick, faded hardback notebook with torn red binding and a black spine, measuring 15 by 12 centimeters, there were 408 names, distributed as follows:

25 A, 63 B, 35 C, 38 D, 6 E, 22 F, 18 G, 3 H, 6 I, 5 J, 14 K, 28 L, 42 M, 8 N, 10 O, 21 P, 13 R, 19 S, 13 T, 1 U, 12 Y, 3 W, 3 Z.

Most of those named lived in Paris, but I also noticed a large number of addresses in Italy, 29 to be precise. The other countries mentioned were: the United States (5), Greece (4), Algeria (3), the Netherlands (3), Switzerland (1), Zaire (1), England (1), Cameroon (1), Austria (1), Portugal (1), Hong Kong (1), Gabon (1), and Germany (1).

As for the dead, they were not struck off the list. Instead, the words "died in ..." were written in red pen, followed by the month and the year of their death. The graphologist I consulted saw the author of this writing as an intelligent, highly educated, and well-structured person with a dry, sharp sense of humor.

**L'HOMME AU
CARNET**

Le feuilleton de l'été, liant textes et images, commence aujourd'hui. L'enquête de Sophie Calle pour dresser le portrait d'un inconnu.



durant plus d'un mois

PARIS. Fin juin.

Je trouve un carnet d'adresses par terre. Je le ramasse. Quelques heures plus tard je le renvoie, anonymement, à son propriétaire dont les coordonnées sont indiquées sur la première page. Entre temps je l'ai entièrement photocopié. J'appellerai ceux qui figurent dans le carnet. Je leur dirai : « J'ai trouvé un carnet d'adresses par hasard dans la rue. J'ai vu votre nom et j'aimerais vous rencontrer ». Je leur demanderai de me parler du propriétaire du carnet dont je ne dévoilerai le nom qu'au moment de l'entretien, s'ils m'accordent un rendez-vous. J'approcherai cet homme à travers ses amis, les descriptions qu'ils me feront de lui. J'apprendrai à le connaître. Il s'appelle Pierre D.

ATION MARDI 2 AOUT 1983

My investigation lasted twenty-eight days (and gave rise to twenty-eight daily articles). Right from the first descriptions, I found myself liking him.

A man who never says, "Yes, okay", but "with pleasure, I'm honored", with courtesy, lots of affectation, bowing and scraping, but funny, very funny, with a particular inflexion of the voice, a kind of controlled incongruity, verging on mannerism, with the flowers of rhetoric, the tone rising and falling. A Lubitsch side to him ... talking with his nose pointing into the air as if he were breathing in what was going on, with a rather old-fashioned appearance; a musketeer, who once caused an uproar in a Brittany station because the return ticket was more expensive than the outward one due to a levy for the tunnel; who bought a rotting joint of pork from "Goulet Turpin" and, when the management refused to reimburse him and the police to register his complaint, made his protest by leaving the meat outside the door of the police station; a man who keeps a file on his enemies in his bookshelf entitled *My Hates*; a Shakespearean character, a mixture of buffoon, common mortal, and tragic figure, who likes to play the role of the man cast down by outrageous fortune and yet at the same time an utterly delighted, warm, reserved man, a very rare mixture, a man who seems to have walked straight out of a Marx Brothers film; a man who nearly died laughing when told the following joke: A guy is doing a

survey on the sex life of the French: "Excuse me, Madame, can you tell me where the erogenous zones are?", and the woman answers: "I'm sorry, I don't live here." A man who loves the Paul Delaroche painting, *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, who gets frightened in airplanes, who, even in a film, could never carry off the role of the had-die; a rather brilliant intellectual who never shows off, who loves minor literature, B-movies, nineteenth-century potboilers, and opera; a pinball wizard, who looks out of place in a nightclub, who wears sagging clothes, who overdoes things: oversize jackets, checked trousers; who is like someone out of a children's book who is both candid and learned; who has trouble being concise when leaving a message on the answering machine and has to call back two or three times; the kind of person computers forget, who loves Italy, Jerry Lewis, smoking cigars, holding a camera, the circus, fairs, comics, especially Blake and Mortimer; an atrocious cook who makes escalopes in pinkish sauces, who loves pasta; a man afloat, navigating through culture, who can't find his place, always ready to fall in love as long as he hasn't a chance, a lover doomed to despair, who says, "I'm in love, we'll see if it works out"; who wanted to be an Egyptologist when he was young, who's always smiling, who always relishes a joke. A man at home as a fruitcake, organized in his solitude. Mysterious. Someone who would be capable of disappearing without trace.

I could almost say that I knew him well. I had left my home to move into a more anonymous place so I could immerse myself more radically in his life and habits. I had stopped seeing my friends the better to devote myself to his—whom I envied him, in fact. It was in his neighborhood that I went out, his tastes that I played at adopting. I was lucky: not only did this man please me, but I was no longer afraid of meeting him prematurely, which would have brought my enquiry to an end, for I soon found out that he had gone away for two months to darkest Norway. I was waiting for him to come back. Apprehensive, but impatient, I sensed romance, the kind of meeting I like.

Most of the people I contacted overcame their initial reticence and agreed to talk, precisely because it was him, and to them all this seemed tailor-made for him. He would love it.

This unanimous assurance of his approbation almost made me forget my apprehension. Thus, on September 2, I ended the interview with Jacques D with the words: "I wonder if he knows about this yet, if he'll be angry with me. Perhaps I'll never know."

He *was* angry. And he told me, when he got back, in the newspaper. He expressed his indignation at the methods used, the intrusion into his privacy; he said how it had wounded him, signing this response and sending a photograph he had obtained using my methods, showing me naked. It ended badly. Although, in a way, he had authenticated my story.

I have never met him. My attempts got nowhere. He is still resentful, he has let me know. That is why, for legal reasons, and because

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that the full story of *The Address Book* is missing from this publication.

*From the author's contract with Violette Editions



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THE ADDRESS BOOK 193

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Libération

DOLLAR LE GRAND

Après une nouvelle
semaine de hausses



matin le soleil psychologique
 (ou du moins symbolique
 pour les Français) de 8 F
 pour 1 dollar. Un chiffrin
 qui fait la double au général
 8 a donner la certitude.

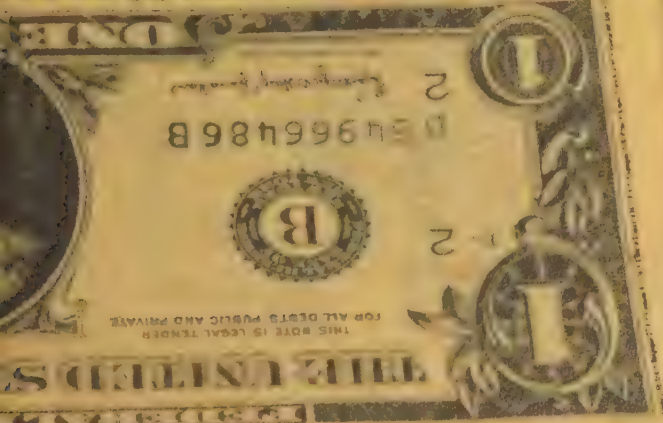
« Plus de rigueur et plus
 d'Europe » a répondu

Dejors. Promesse ou

menace de « plus de rigueur », esprit de
 « plus d'Europe »... Lire pages 2 à 8

TCHAD: ARMES FRANÇAISES ANTI-AERIENNES POUR HISSENE HABRE

La République française a décidé de répondre au SOS de
 l'armée tchadienne. Elle lui fournira des armes anti-aériennes
 pour la défense de son territoire. Ces armes sont destinées à
 protéger les installations militaires et les populations civiles.
 Elles sont destinées à être utilisées contre les avions ennemis.
 Elles sont destinées à être utilisées contre les avions ennemis.
 Elles sont destinées à être utilisées contre les avions ennemis.



THE BIRTHDAY CEREMONY

On my birthday I always worry that people may forget me. I decided that every year, if possible, a number of people were proceeding to my age. I did not use the presents received on these occasions. In 1993, at the age of forty, I put an end to the

contacts), but as time went on I understood that she was merely eccentric, an unorthodox person who lived her life according to an elaborate set of bizarre, private rituals. Every experience was systematized for her, a self-contained adventure that generated its own risks and limitations, and each one of her projects fell into a different category, separate from all the others. In my case, I belonged to the category of sex. She appointed me as her bed partner on that first night, and that was the function I continued to serve until the end. In the universe of Maria's compulsions, I was just one ritual among many, but I was fond of the role she had picked for me, and I never found any reason to complain.

Maria was an artist, but the work she did had nothing to do with creating objects commonly defined as art. Some people called her a photographer, others referred to her as a conceptualist, still others considered her a writer, but none of these descriptions was accurate, and in the end I don't think she can be pigeonholed in any way. Her work was too nutty for that, too idiosyncratic, too personal to be thought of as belonging to any particular medium or discipline. Ideas would take hold of her, she would work on projects, there would be concrete results that could be shown in galleries, but this activity didn't stem from a desire to make art so much as from a need to indulge her obsessions, to live her life precisely as she wanted to live it. Living always came first, and a number of her most time-consuming projects were done strictly for herself and never shown to

ANYONE.

Since the age of fourteen, she had saved all the birthday presents that had ever been given to her – still wrapped, neatly arranged on shelves according to the year. As an adult, she held an annual birthday dinner in her own honor, always inviting the same number of guests as her age. Some weeks, she would indulge in what she called 'the chromatic diet,' restricting herself to foods of a single color on any given day. Monday orange: carrots, cantaloupe, boiled shrimp. Tuesday red: tomatoes, persimmons, steak tartare. Wednesday white: flounder, potatoes, cottage cheese. Thursday green: cucumbers, broccoli, spinach –

over me. In 1980, to relieve myself of this
December 9, I would invite us dinner the evening
along a stranger chosen by one of my guests.
savings I kept them as tokens of affection.
and.

and so on, all the way through the last meal on Sunday. At other times, she would make similar divisions based on the letters of the alphabet. Whole days would be spent under the spell of *b*, *c*, or *w*, and then, just as suddenly as she had started it, she would abandon the game and go on to something else. These were no more than whims, I suppose, tiny experiments with the idea of classification and habit, but similar games were just as likely to go on for many years. There was the long-term project of dressing Mr L., for example, a stranger she had once met at a party. Maria found him to be one of the handsomest men she had ever seen, but his clothes were a disgrace, she thought, and so without announcing her intentions to anyone, she took it upon herself to improve his wardrobe. Every year at Christmas she would send him an anonymous gift – a tie, a sweater, an elegant shirt – and because Mr L. moved in roughly the same social circles that she did, she would run into him every now and again, noting with pleasure the dramatic changes in his sartorial appearance. For the fact was that Mr L. always wore the clothes that Maria sent him. She would even go up to him at these gatherings and compliment him on what he was wearing, but that was as far as it went, and he never caught on that she was the one responsible for those Christmas packages.

She had grown up in Holyoke, Massachusetts, the only child of parents who divorced when she was six. After graduating from high school in 1970, she had gone down to New York with the idea of attending art school and becoming a painter, but she lost interest after one term and dropped out. She bought herself a secondhand Dodge van and took off on a tour of the American continent, staying for exactly two weeks in each state, finding temporary work along the way whenever possible – waitressing jobs, migrant farm jobs, factory jobs, earning just enough to keep her going from one place to the next. It was the first of her mad, compulsive projects, and in some sense it stands as the most extraordinary thing she ever did: a totally meaningless and arbitrary act to which she devoted almost two years of her life. Her only ambition was to spend fourteen days in every state, and





- Walt Disney Productions paper tablecloth
- Four velvet-covered cardboard horses with moveable heads
- Gold plastic belt
- Eyeshadow compact: Miss Helen Harmonie 5
- Silver and copper handbag
- Box of Viennese "Mozart" chocolates
- Book by Villiers de L'isle Adam: *L'Amour suprême* (Editions L'Ange du bizarre)
- Set of seven Polaroid photographs by Gertrude O'Byrne
- Twelve plastic hairslides in the shape of hands
- Personal diary (September 27–October 8, 1980) entitled *Pour Sophie*, signed Catherine Weinzaepflen
- Textile collage made by Natalie Mei
- Black box entitled *Petit matériel mystérieux pour jolie détective privée*, containing various tubes and archaic electrical components
- Bouquet of flowers
- Wrought-iron sculpture wrapped in a multi-colored scarf
- Bouquet of silk flowers
- Photograph by Wilfrid Rouff, entitled *It's time to eat*
- US 100-dollar bill, dated 1934
- 1000 French francs
- Telegram: *Impossible venir...*
Jean-Marc Bustamente

Remarks

Only one of the twenty-seven guests did not turn up. Not counting joint presents, two people came empty-handed. The stranger brought flowers. Pique getting the better of professional conscience, I tore up the telegram.



- Bouquet of flowers
- Book by Mario Vargas Llosa:
La maison verte (Editions NRF
Gallimard)
- Construction by David
Rochline (mirror, gilded wood,
marsh-mallows, chocolates,
candies, and plastic doll)
- Jean-Charles Brosseau cream-
colored knitted-cotton gloves
- Bottle of *eau de vie*, labelled
Pour les 28 ans de Sophie Calle
- Compass
- Book by Henry Miller: *Insomnia
ou le diable en liberté* (Editions
Stock)
- Red satin mini-dress, decorated
with black plastic grapes, and a
red mask
- Miniature chair in blue Formica
- Vedette washing machine
- Black mask
- Twenty-eight fruit-flavored
lollipops
- Photograph by Manuel Alvarez
Bravo, entitled *Le rêve éveillé*
- Bottle of Moët & Chandon
champagne
- Book by Maurice Achard and
Anne-Marie Métaillé:
*Les années soixante en noir et
blanc* (Editions Ammi)
- Beige umbrella with a handle
in the shape of a dog's head
- Petal-shaped ashtray that can
be disassembled
- Twenty-eight drawing pads
- Twenty-eight earrings
- Book by Henri-Alexis Baatsch:
Roman polonais (Editions Pierre
Bordas et Fils)
- Book by Marie José Parra-
Aledo: *Images fugitives* (Editions
Pierre Bordas et Fils)
- Four white buttons

Remarks

All twenty-eight guests appeared.
The stranger gave me the black mask.
Because of its irresistible utility, the
washing machine is represented by
a manufacturer's warranty (by giving
me this present, my clever mother
managed to subvert the ritual).



1982

- Rosières cooker
- Oil painting, undated, unsigned

Remarks

First break in the ritual. I was away so it was impossible to organize a birthday meal in accordance with the rules of the game. My father gave me the painting, my mother the cooker. Because of its irresistible utility, the latter is represented by the manufacturer's warranty.



- Photograph of dancer Anna Duncan (photographer unidentified)
- 19th-C Ambrotype portrait
- Book by Jean Clair: *Duchamp et la photographie* (Editions du Chêne)
- Red and white polka dot teacup and saucer, and one red nylon scarf with the words *Pour Sophie*, David hand-painted in white
- Jute bag with leather handles and closures
- Wooden dildo, African provenance, twenty-four centimeters long, wrapped in a poster for the news-paper *Libération* and accompanied by a bouquet of flowers
- Prehistoric silex arrowhead, enveloped in a chunk of plastic, on which a red heart is drawn, stapled to a visiting card of Jacques Ohayon
- Pair of yellow plastic sunglasses
- Twelve bottles of Graves red wine, bottled by the Coste family for L'Ecluse, 1981
- Collage entitled *Assomption*, made from various etchings
- Book by Jean Echenoz: *Cherokee* (Editions de Minuit), with page numbers from page thirty-one onwards punched out and stored in a small transparent plastic box
- Jean-Charles Brosseau leopard-print beret
- Work by Annette Messenger; text embroidered with red thread on white cotton reading, *Qui a bonne voisine a bonne mine, la voisine a 30 ans, on est tous content, mais aime ta voisine sans ôter la haie de l'usine, sonnons les matines, mangeons les tartines (quel régal chez la Calle)*,
- Vive la voisine.*
- Cardboard mobile by David Rochline, comprising five elements, each representing a pastry (an éclair, a mini angelfood cake, a slice of cherry tart, a chocolate cake, and an unidentifiable cake)
- Color drawing encrusted with stones, made by Pasquale Lafay
- Thirty-page notebook made by Pascaline Cuvelier, reproducing on tracing paper my project entitled *Le carnet d'adresses* (*The Address Book*), published in *Libération* in 1983
- Box containing twelve starched detachable collars
- Second-hand Marantz turntable
- Lipstick: Chanel Rouge Comédie n° 77
- Green jade bracelet
- Two books: *How to Become a More Popular Hostess* and *How to Give Successful Parties* (Bonomo Handy Pocket Manuals, nos. 11 and 35)
- Book by Delia Ephron: *Comment faire l'enfant, 17 leçons pour ne pas grandir* (Inédit Virgule, Editions du Seuil)
- Request made by Léon Hugghe for a papal blessing: *In articulo mortis*, dated February 28, 1948
- Three stereograms, entitled *The Wedding Breakfast, Dear Santa Claus Send Me a New Doll, Some New Games ... and Fallen Asleep Just Like Papa*
- Work in plaster by Luc Lauras
- Box containing a medal with the initials AJ, dated May 24, 1906
- A fake diamond and a cheap watch
- Succulent plant
- *Eau de toilette*: Guerlain Shalimar
- Electric radiator

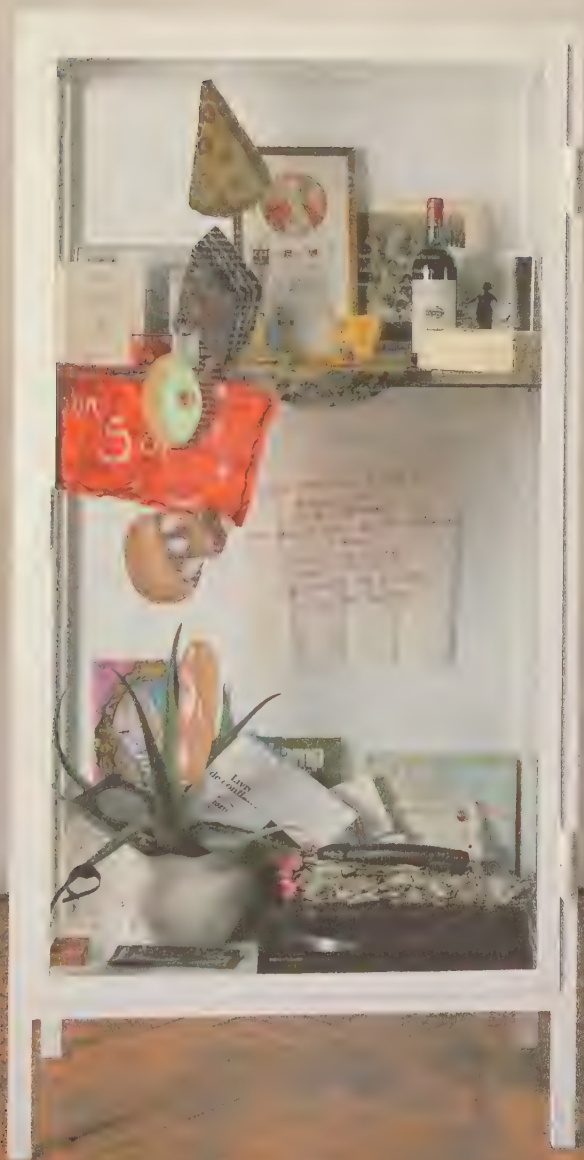
Remarks

I also received this letter (here translated from the French):
 "Cannes, 10.4.83. My dear Sophie:
 Best wishes for your birthday.

I understand that I'm not to talk to you about marriage any more, but if I would be happy if you found a good companion so that you won't always be on your own. I send you all my love and my best wishes for your health. I enclose a little check for the cinema. Your grandmother."

It was a check for 1000 francs. Out of necessity, I cashed it.

The thirty guests all appeared. The lipstick was given to me by the stranger. Temptation was too strong and eleven of the bottles of wine were drunk, leaving only one. Because of its irresistible utility, the radiator is represented by the manufacturer's warranty.



- Promissory note for a trip to the mountains (in Valloire)
- Drawing by Martial Raysse, signed on the back, in a pearl-beaded frame
- Book by Marguerite Duras: *L'Amant* (Editions de Minuit)
- Bottle of Roi David champagne
- Bouquet of twenty roses
- *Ex-voto*, on a wood panel, dated August 13, 1811
- Nilfisk vacuum cleaner
- Pair of silk panties with the embroidered initials SC
- 8 mm Parad 117 flare pistol, wrapped in a dishtowel along with the instruction manual and a box of nine cartridges
- Black nylon kimono
- Blue plastic drying rack with clothespegs
- Thirteen peacock feathers
- Menu from Le Malakoff, 6 place du Trocadero, Paris, 16ème
- Sarong
- Box of chocolates made by Sprüngli, Zürich
- Book by the Marquis de Sade with 60 etchings: *Histoire de Juliette ou les prospérités du vice* (publisher not given; printed in Switzerland)
- Book: *Le tour du monde en 80 plats ... et 200 recettes succulentes* (Editions Marabout Flash)
- Hand warmer with a dozen refill packets
- Tube containing ten 15 mm flares
- Silver-plate hammered metal flask
- Metal flask in a leather sheath
- Eiffel Tower-shaped mirror
- Four boxes each containing fifty waterproof matches and one brass matchbox
- Plastic fold-a-cup for camping, hiking, hunting and fishing
- Disposable hand warmer
- Image of St Theresa of Lisieux in a frame inlaid with oystershells, a St Theresa of Lisieux candle, a St Theresa of Lisieux lighter
- Box containing thirty-one Eiffel Tower keyrings and brooches, with an instruction to distribute them on the Trans-Siberian railway
- Bracelet of rubber balls

Remarks

The thirty-one guests all appeared. Two of them, including the stranger, did not bring a present. The promissory note for a trip to the mountains was honored in 1985. I couldn't resist opening the box of chocolates, so five are missing.



- Pink nylon *Dallas* outfit with matching earrings, a *Divin Olé* skirt with matching earrings and Christian Dior underwear, all accompanied by directions for use
- Two bottles of perfume: Christian Dior Poison and Guerlain Mitsouko
- Request made by Marie Marcelle Vincent and family for a papal blessing: *In articulo mortis*, dated September 28, 1929
- Work by Christian Boltanski (battery and cut-out figure in bark)
- Work by Annette Messenger (Hieronimus Bosch postcard with a painting on canvas, inscribed on the back: *Pour Sophie, pour son amour des cartes postales "de maîtres", pour son amour de l'Espagne etc ... la voisine*)
- Satin case containing religious medals
- Ink drawing by Roland Topor inscribed: *Pour Sophie. Bon anniversaire, Roland*
- Victorinox Swiss army knife
- Miniature by Pasquale Lafay representing the Nativity, inside a matchbox
- Pen and ink depiction of Christ dated December 30, 1881, signature illegible
- Jean-Charles Brosseau navy-blue hat
- Pair of mother-of-pearl and silver salad servers
- Fragment of a porcelain mortuary plaque with the still legible words: *Martial décédé le 16... à l'âge...* and inscribed on the back: *Dérobé à Oradour pour Sophie*
- Book by Emmanuel Bove: *Un homme qui savait* (Editions La Table Ronde)
- Book by Ernesto Sabato: *Le Tunnel* (Editions Point)
- Six boxes of Kodak Tri-X Pan black-and-white film, 400 ASA, twenty exposures, expiry date December 1986
- Book by Patricia Bosworth: *Diane Arbus: A Biography* (Alfred A Knopf)
- Boxed set of three records of Bizet's *Carmen*, conducted by Georges Prêtre, with Maria Callas as *Carmen*
- Pair of leather boots
- Mini-telephone in the form of a rabbit
- Metro pass for the month of November 1985
- Book by Dominique Aubier: *Guerre à la tristesse* (Editions Robert Delpire)
- French-language dictionary and one dictionary of proper names from the Petit Robert collection
- Horsehair handbag
- Bottle of champagne, Delafon, Reims
- Cassette tape of different styles of music all connected with Spain, recorded especially for me
- Six drinking glasses picturing bathing beauties with the instruction: *Un glaçon et elles se déshabillent*
- Blue plastic belt
- Christian Dior bodysuit, size 2
- Fragment of rusted railroad track
- Blank notebook, dedicated: *En espérant que tu le ressortiras du carton 32, pour quelques annotations fameuses ... Baisers et Bon anni, comme on dit chez nous . . . Virginie, ou la repêchée du 32ième!!!*
- Spanish poster mounted on cloth for a bullfighting festival at the Puerto arena on Sunday, April 1, 1962

Remarks

The thirty-two guests all appeared. The stranger brought the two bottles of perfume, Poison and Mitsouko. I couldn't resist the temptation to listen to *Carmen* and to wear—seventy-two times—the boots. As a result, they deteriorated and sides one and two of the record are scratched.



- Case (imitation Louis Vuitton) containing two wrist-watches (imitation Rolex and imitation Baume & Mercier)
- Comic book: *The Three Stooges*, with 3-D spectacles
- Box containing thirty-three individually wrapped objects
- Two pairs of castanets
- New York City subway map
- Two small plastic frames with ID photos of Trey Speegle
- Two ink-stamps, each representing an eye with, on one, the inscription *For Sophie an eye...*, and on the other *Looking out at 33 years*
- Pair of Evan Picone socks
- Thirty-three-page autograph book, each page filled in by one of my thirty-three guests
- Text work by Lawrence Weiner: *In lieu of twilight rising sun*. Inscribed: *For Sophie on her trip Down Under*. Lawrence Weiner. New York. Happy Birthday 33. 16 Oct. 1986
- Book by Claudio Edinger: *Chelsea Hotel* (Abbeville Press)
- Kaleidoscope
- Revolver-shaped lighter
- Receipt entitled *To Sophie from Walter*, with calculations showing thirty-three years in days: 12 045; in hours: 289 080; in minutes: 17 344 800; in seconds: 1 040 688 000
- Fragment of a rosary (6cm in length)
- Pink plastic rose
- Red notebook containing fifty index cards
- Wrist-watch with the American flag decorating the dial
- Book by Danielle Duval: *Pages from Maria Kozic's Book* (Art Criticism Monograph Series)
- Comic book: *The Legend of Wonder Woman*
- Pair of Window Pane seamless fishnet stockings
- Univex Supra Bakelite camera
- Three boxes containing a total of thirty-three Mongol lead pencils
- Record of Ezra Pound reading his translation of the Confucian Odes
- Record entitled *Anthology of Negro Poets in the USA, 200 years*
- Booklet by Hugh Morris: *How to Make Love: The Secret of Wooing and Winning the One You Love* (Padell Books), with numerous precepts such as "Without love we would not have marriage"
- Packet containing a pair of stockings with embroidered panties
- Pencil sharpener in the form of a globe
- Certificate confirming that Miss Sophie Calle flew on Concorde, on May 27, 1987, between Paris and New York, for her thirty-third birthday

Remarks

For any particularly attentive readers who may have noticed that the Concorde flight certificate as well as a number of pages in the autograph book are dated May 27, 1987, I must admit that, since I was unable to organize my birthday meal on October 9, 1986, and in order not to keep breaking the rule I had set myself, I preferred to postpone the ritual to a later date. I chose May 27, and so I pretended that was the day I was born. As for Lawrence Weiner, who dated his drawing October 16, he knew about the trick but still got the date wrong. The meal was given in New York and there were thirty-three guests. The stranger brought the plastic rosebud.



1987

- Photograph by Ralph Gibson,
entitled *The Magician's
Daughter*, dated 1973,
edition no. 1/25
- Philips video cassette recorder

Remarks

Second break in the ritual. I was away so it was impossible to organize a birthday meal in accordance with the rules of the game. My father gave me the photograph, my mother the vcr. Unable to resist the temptation, I used it temporarily.



1988

- Oil painting representing a closed door, undated and with an illegible signature
- Grundig color television
- Desk calendar set at October 9

Remarks

Third break in the ritual. I was away so it was impossible to organize a birthday meal in accordance with the rules of the game. My father gave me the painting, my mother the television. Unable to resist the temptation, I used it temporarily.



- Photograph by Roberto Martinez, entitled *Sainte-Véronique*
- Book entitled *Funéraires* (Editions du Chêne)
- Medallion containing braids of hair forming the initials GM
- Souleiado silk scarf
- Second-hand Sony cassette tape recorder
- Work by Jean-Michel Othoniel (book and postcard), entitled *Les casse-tête de face d'ange*
- Matador's sword sheath formerly owned by Simon Casas
- Work by Jean-Michel Othoniel (book and sulfur), entitled *Une étincelle suffirait*
- Collage on paper, anonymous
- Drawing pad and a box of twelve Toison d'or coloring pencils
- Work by Annette Messenger (blonde hair, framed)

Remarks

As I was too far away to organize a birthday meal in keeping with the rules of the game, and rather than break the ritual once again, I opted for limited numbers. The meal was given in Aigues-Mortes with twelve guests and no stranger.



- Book by Francisco de Quevedo: *Sonnets amoureux* (Editions La Délirante), inscribed A Sophie, *décidément ...* Monique Frydman
- Book by Oliver Sacks: *Des yeux pour entendre* (Editions du Seuil)
- Book by Manuel Chaves Nogales: *Juan Belmonte: matador de taureaux* (Editions Verdier)
- Book by Edouard Boubat: *Anges* (Editions Atelier d'Expression), inscribed *Pour Sophie et ses trente-sept ans*. Jean-Michel
- Wax figure of an angel
- Ashtray from the restaurant Salvador, printed *Salvador, Especialidad en pechugas*, Barbieri 12, Madrid
- Handtowel from the Hotel Victoria, Madrid
- Record of the group Malevaje, entitled *Un momentito*
- Photograph of El Cid's storage chest, signed Burgos
- Black hat from Cordoba
- Pair of plastic earrings in the form of angels
- Plastic bull in a box, with the message *Bon anniversaire, Sophie, Barbet*
- Work by Christian Boltanski (winged figure with candle), from the series *Les ombres*
- Pink Christian Lacroix belt
- Book by Raymond Chandler: *Adieu, ma jolie; La dame du lac; Charades pour écroulés* (Editions NRF Gallimard)
- Book by Chester Himes: *La reine des pommes; Il pleut des coups durs; Couchés dans le pain* (Editions NRF Gallimard)
- Work by Annette Messenger (photograph embroidered Sophie)
- Black satin handbag embroidered with silver sequins
- Rug of Chinese provenance, representing a bullfighting scene
- Lithograph by Miguel Barcelò, inscribed *Para sophia entre Paris, Africa y Sevilla. Con muchos besos de Miguel*. 19 Oct 90, signed and numbered 9/26
- My astrological chart, drawn by hand and identified Sophie C. 9.10.53 15h15
- Two playing cards (3 and 7 of hearts to make 37), signed Serge
- Cardboard slice of cake, made by David Rochline
- Promissory note for a birthday gift
- Lamp made by Dominique Lyon
- Second promissory note for a birthday gift
- Plastic figure of a bullfighter
- Bosch refrigerator/freezer
- Compact disc by Cheickha Remitti: *Ghir El Baroud*
- Bear, formed from moss
- Book by Nestor Lujan: *Historia del Torero* (Editions Destino)
- Two potted cypress trees, 40 cm high
- Keyring and chain, with fob containing a fragment of the Berlin Wall
- Thirty-seven bottles of wine: twelve Château Gloria, A C St Julien 1985, from Henri Martin's vineyard; twelve Château Haut Bages Liberal, A C Pauillac 1985; twelve Clos René, A C Pomerol 1985, from Pierre Lasser's vineyard; one Château le Boscq, A C St Estèphe 1985, from Ph Durand's vineyard
- Pair of red satin gloves embroidered with pearls and stones
- Wooden wheel
- Fricassée of crayfish for thirty-seven people

Remarks

The thirty-seven guests all appeared. The two notes promising a birthday present were never honored. One of them was from the stranger. I decided that it was best to put the two cypresses and the moss bear in the garden. The cypresses were killed by the cold and the bear perished. There are photographs to remember them by. As for the fridge/freezer, because of its irresistible utility it is represented by a manufacturer's warranty. Since the guests didn't necessarily share my concerns, the crayfish fricassée was eaten there and then.



- Pair of pink matador's stockings
- Matador's hat
- Hand-embroidered
matador's cape
- Work by Greg Shephard (plaster,
wax, plastic, and iron)
- Third volume of the complete
works of Franz Kafka (Editions
La Pléiade)
- Stuffed rooster (taxidermic)
- Vedette washing machine
- Album of photos dated
August 1931
- Pair of Stephane Kélian
high-heeled shoes
- Boxed set of two compact
discs: *Elvis Presley's All Time
Greatest Hits*

Remarks

Since I was too far away to organize a birthday meal in keeping with the rules of the game, I opted for limited numbers. The meal was given in Seville with twelve guests and no stranger. Unable to resist the temptation, I wore the shoes fifty-two times. Because of its irresistible utility, the washing machine is represented by a manufacturer's warranty.



- Video cassette: *Hearts of Darkness*
- Chest of drawers
- Letter from Greg Shephard
promising to give me, at some
later date, the pocket watch that
he inherited from his father
- Jigsaw puzzle of 100 pieces
representing Noah's Ark
- Birthday cake
- Compact disc by Evan Lurie:
Selling Water by the Side of the River
- Photograph by Catherine Wagner,
inscribed *Pour Sophie Happy
Birthday love Catherine 9 Oct 1992*
- Pair of embroidered blue panties
(63% nylon, 15% spandex,
11% rayon, 11% cotton)
- Class C fireworks "Made in China"
- Scholtes cooker

Remarks

Since I was too far away to organize a birthday meal in keeping with the rules of the game, I opted for limited numbers. The meal was given in San Francisco with twelve guests and no stranger. Greg Shephard never honored his promise. Temptation having proved stronger than professional duty, the cake is represented by the postcard that came with it and the cooker by a manufacturer's warranty.



- Two self-portraits by Cindy Sherman, signed, dated 1980/1992, and inscribed *To Sophie, with love on your 40th Birthday!* Cindy
- Book by Leni Riefenstahl: *A Memoir* (St Martin's Press)
- Work by Jon Kessler (pagoda on springs in a box) with the message: *40 Happy Birthday SOPHIE!* Oct 9th, 1993 Jon
- Box of pearls with a message written on the inside: *For Sophie Calle, my friend, October 9, 1993, New York City, with love Alan K. Dear Sophie, Pearls can be a bed, they can be a necklace, they can be lost. Aren't they beautiful? Happy Birthday*
- Bar of soap with the word *Folly* carved on one side and *Wisdom* on the other
- Work by Serena Carone (sculpture in plaster, electric lights, silk, velvet, religious medals, chicken bone and metal stand on which is painted: *Para Sophie Calle el nueve de octubre mil noveciento noventa y tres. Santa Virgen de las Suplicas complidas*)
- New York City Fireman's T-shirt: *FDNY ENG. 207*
- Work by Christian Boltanski (iron box dated 8.3.72 containing hair)
- Work by Greg Shephard (metal wire, pacifier, and chain links)
- Keyring on chain with fob in the form of a red shark
- Magnum of champagne, Louis Roederer, Reims
- Work by Jean-Michel Othoniel (match-striking strip), entitled *L'Anniversaire*
- Framed photograph of the staff of the Grand Theater, Nîmes, inscribed *Yves à Sophie* Oct 93
- Work by Yves Klein (gold leaf, pink pigment, and blue pigment on paper)
- Bottle of Bertolli olive oil
- Tube of Rembrandt toothpaste
- Set of eight dessert plates made by Jean-Michel Othoniel
- Candle representing a black cat in front of a grave
- Silver candlestick and forty white, blue, and pink candles, tied together with a red ribbon
- Cardboard wallet
- Plastic cat's nose with whiskers
- Set of Tarot cards
- Metal boat wrapped in tin foil, with a message in the bottom: *Happy Birthday to Sophie. 40. Dick*
- Pornographic photograph on yellowed paper, inscribed: *Sophie, Certain photographs imply that there is no actual reason that the various objects therein contained cannot exist within different autonomous perspectives. This has been the mandate of Renaissance [sic] painting and continues to fascinate the photographer who, in fact, remains welded to a single focal length. FAUX-TOGRALPH Ralph Gibson*
- Blank notebook "Made in China"
- Book: *Collected Stories of Paul Bowles* (Black Sparrow Press)
- Book by Scott Bradfield: *The History of Luminous Motion* (Vintage), inscribed *Dearest Sophie, Wishing you the best in your 40th! I can't believe you are 40! With affection, Pat xx*
- Two books by Olivier Boissière: *Jean Nouvel* (Studio paperbacks) and *L'Inist dans l'oeuvre de Jean Nouvel* (Editions Demi-Cercle)
- Book by Luc Santé: *Evidence* (Noonday), inscribed *Pour Sophie, avec admiration et meilleurs voeux pour un joyeux 40e 9.X.93 Luc*
- Book by Jerzy Kosinski: *The Painted Bird* (Pocket Books)
- Calvin Klein lace bodysuit, with a postcard inscribed *To Sophie, love, Bette, 10.9.93*
- Bracelet made of hair, in an envelope inscribed *For brilliant Sophie, much love, Jennifer*
- Promise of a gift from Lewis Baltz
- Painting dating from the end of the fifteenth century, entitled *Luce de Montfort*



1993 CONTINUED...

- Plaster angel, delivered in five pieces (two arms, two wings, body, and head with an unfurled banner between its hands, reading: *GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!!*)

Remarks

I decided to bring this ritual to an end. This game, which once reassured me, no longer served a purpose. For the last occasion, forty-three guests appeared. Lewis Baltz's promise was kept the following year, with a photograph entitled *Motel Room, Central California, April, 1967*. The stranger gave me the notebook with blank pages.

As for *Luce de Montfort*, I had always seen it hanging in my mother's house. My father said they bought the painting together for my first birthday and so it was mine. My mother denied this. Self-interest made me more inclined to believe my father's version. But my mother had been fighting this war of attrition for ten years now: not before she was dead would it come into my possession. Now she suddenly decided that it was a good date to give up the battle. *Luce* is mine, for my first and my fortieth birthdays.







Paul Auster & Sophie Calle

Gotham Handbook

III One of the many ways of
or how to try to become a chaotic
Leviathan, Auster has taken
swapping roles and taking
actions. I asked him to invent
I would attempt to resemble
Paul Auster to do what he
of up to a year at most. Auster
not want to take responsibility
when I acted out the script
preferred to send me "Person
on How to Improve Life in
she asked ...)". I followed his
entitled *Gotham Handbook*.

mingling fact with fiction,
acter out of a novel. Since, in
ne as a subject, I imagined
n as the author of my
t a fictive character which
I was, in effect, inviting
nted with me, for a period
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y for what might happen
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7 pages - including this one

3.6-74

Dear Sophie:

Well, here's something, in any case. I did it after we talked yesterday - and though it's short on details - it might inspire some interesting activities. I wanted to leave it open enough so that you could find your own way through the ideas.

I hope you're not too disappointed by the "lightness" of what I've prepared.

In any case - be well, and get in touch when you can.

Yours ever -

P. M.

GOTHAM HANDBOOK

Personal Instructions for S.C.

On How to Improve Life in New York City

(Because she asked...)

★

Paul Auster

Smiling

Smile when the situation doesn't call for it. Smile when you're feeling angry, when you're feeling miserable, when you're feeling most crushed by the world--and see if it makes any difference.

Smile at strangers in the street. New York can be dangerous, so you must be careful. If you prefer, smile only at female strangers. (Men are beasts, and they must not be given the wrong idea.)

Nevertheless, smile as often as possible at people you don't know. Smile at the bank teller who gives you your money, at the waitress who gives you your food, at the person sitting across from you on the IRT.

See if anyone smiles back at you.

Keep track of the number of smiles you are given each day.

Don't be disappointed when people don't smile back at you.

Consider each smile you receive a precious gift.

Talking to Strangers

There will be people who talk to you after you smile at them. You must be prepared with flattering comments.

Some of these people will talk to you because they feel confused or threatened or insulted by your show of friendliness. ("You got a problem, lady?") Plunge in immediately with a disarming com-

pliment. "No, I was just admiring your beautiful tie." Or: "I love your dress."

Others will talk to you because they are friendly souls, happy to respond to the human overtures that come their way. Try to keep these conversations going as long as you can. It doesn't matter what you talk about. The important thing is to give of yourself and see to it that some form of genuine contact is made.

If you find yourself running out of things to say, bring up the subject of the weather. Cynics regard this as a banal topic, but the fact is that no subject gets people talking faster. Stop and think about it for a moment, and you'll begin to see a metaphysical, even religious quality to this preoccupation with wind-chill factors and Central Park snowfall accumulations. Weather is the great equalizer. There is nothing anyone can do about it, and it affects us all in the same way--rich and poor, black and white, healthy and sick. The weather makes no distinctions. When it rains on me, it also rains on you. Unlike most of the problems we face, it is not a condition created by man. It comes from nature, or God, or whatever else you want to call the forces in the universe we cannot control. To discuss the weather with a stranger is to shake hands and put aside your weapons. It is a sign of good will, an acknowledgment of your common humanity with the person you are talking to.

With so many things driving us apart, with so much hatred and discord in the air, it is good to remember the things that bring us together. The more we insist on them in our dealings with strangers, the better ~~our~~ morale in the city will be.

Beggars and Homeless People

I'm not asking you to reinvent the world. I just want you to pay attention to it, to think about the things around you more than you think about yourself. At least while you're outside, walking down the street on your way from here to there.

Don't ignore the miserable ones. They are everywhere, and a person can grow so accustomed to seeing them that he begins to forget they are there. Don't forget.

I'm not asking you to give all your money to the poor. Even if you did, poverty would still exist (and have one more member among its ranks).

At the same time, it's our responsibility as human beings not to harden our hearts. Action is necessary, no matter how small or hopeless our gestures might seem to be.

Stock up on bread and cheese. Every time you leave the house, make three or four sandwiches and put them in your pocket. Every time you see a hungry person, give him a sandwich.

Stock up on cigarettes as well. Common wisdom says that cigarettes are bad for your health, but what common wisdom ^{reflects to} ~~always~~ say is that they also give great comfort to the people who smoke them.

Don't just give one or two. Give ^{away} whole packs.

If you find your pockets can't hold enough sandwiches, go to the nearest MacDonald's and buy as many meal coupons as you can afford. Give these coupons away when you're out of cheese sandwiches. You might not like the food at MacDonald's, but most people do. Con-

sidering the alternatives, they give pretty good value for the money.

These coupons will be especially helpful on cold days. Not only will ^{the} hungry person be able to fill his stomach, he'll be able to go inside somewhere and get warm.

If you can't think of anything to say when you give the coupon to the hungry person, talk about the weather.

Cultivating a Spot

People are not the only ones neglected in New York. Things are neglected as well. I don't just mean big things like bridges and subway tracks, I mean the small, barely noticeable things standing right in front of our eyes: patches of sidewalk, walls, park benches. Look closely at the things around you and you'll see that nearly everything is falling apart.

Pick one spot in the city and begin to think of it as yours. It doesn't matter where, and it doesn't matter what. A street corner, a subway entrance, a tree in the park. Take on this place as your responsibility. Keep it clean. Beautify it. Think of it as an extension of who you are, as a part of your identity. Take as much pride in it as you would in your own home.

Go to your spot every day at the same time. Spend an hour watching everything that happens to it, keeping track of everyone who passes by or stops or does anything there. Take notes, take photographs. Make a record of these daily observations and see if you learn anything about the people or the place or yourself.

Smile at the people who come there. Whenever possible, talk to them. If you can't think of anything to say, begin by talking about the weather.

March 5, 1994

I wonder if Paul got his idea for these instructions concerning ways of making life in New York more beautiful by reading the twelve steps of an Alcoholics Anonymous program, or whether he based them on a community service order. Anyway, I have a duty to obey. That was the agreement. I have no other choice but to submit. If I fulfill this assignment maybe he will offer me the novel that I have been asking for as a reward.

As far as the first instruction—the SMILING one—is concerned, it shouldn't involve too much training. This is something I have already practiced. The only problem is keeping track of the number of smiles received each day. Paul didn't ask me to count the smiles I give. Unquestionably an oversight. I add this item to the *Handbook*.

Concerning the instruction TALKING TO STRANGERS, not being in the habit of making compliments, I try out a few formulae:

"It was so lovely to have a chat with you, I hope I'll have the pleasure again."

"This was a very interesting conversation, we must get together again."

"Thank you for the very pleasant moment we have just spent together."

"What a terrific hairdo. I really do like it."

"Just keep on being yourself. Your smile was worth the day." (For this one I'll really have to make a huge effort.)

Since Paul's *Gotham Handbook* recommends that I make use of meteorological considerations,

I may as well take this opportunity to improve my vocabulary. So, there can be *breezes, storms, turbulence, fog, squalls, sunny spells, slight improvements* ... you can be *boiling, baking, roasting, freezing, melting* ... the temperature can be *mild, clement, idyllic, freezing, frosty, harsh, Siberian* ... the climate *temperate, rigorous, severe, salubrious, healthy, humid, dry, rainy* ... the air *fresh, limpid, biting, burning* ... the heat *torrid, scorching, moderate, oppressive, stifling, tropical, the day pleasant, misty, windy, delightful, clear, gray, brisk, spring-like, enchanting, invigorating, unpleasant, gloomy, tedious, terrible, nasty* ... the sky *blue, turquoise, clear, pure, calm, serene, misty, overcast, cloudy, lowering, stormy, leaden, fleecy, crystalline, limpid*. It can be *low and oppressive* ...

Paul is right, you could go on about it forever. And if I crack up, why not: "I hate this stupid sun. It's really a day for hanging yourself, don't you think?"

Third clause: BEGGARS AND HOMELESS PEOPLE. I buy white bread, sliced yellow cheese, ham, tomatoes, and four packs of cigarettes (Marlboro, Camel, Benson & Hedges, Kool).

Final clause: CULTIVATE A SPOT. I choose the phone booth located at the corner of Greenwich and Harrison streets. It's a double phone booth. I pick the one to the right.

To decorate it, I buy: Glass Plus window cleaner, Brasso metal polish, Krylon "clover green" spray paint, six writing pads, six pencils, one mirror, Devcon epoxy glue, two twelve-foot chains, two padlocks,

one bouquet of red roses, one ashtray, two folding chairs, and the current issue of *Glamour* magazine.

During the night of Tuesday, September 20, 1994, I take over the phone booth. I start by dusting and polishing. Two men are watching me. One of them asks, "Do you do windows too?" Am I supposed to inaugurate my smiling task? I choose to postpone it until tomorrow. I don't answer, for, as you said yourself Paul, men are pigs. Only five minutes after I started, my fears are confirmed. They are taking me for a nutcase. Too bad.

I get to work on the floor, which I paint green, set out the postcards, mirror, ashtray, flowers, and chain the chairs. As a demonstration of my capacity to perform obediently these good deeds that I am asked to do, I cover the telephone company's NYNEX logo, the name of which is displayed across the top of the booth, with a sign that reads "HAVE A NICE DAY", the American expression which punctuates every conversation and which I hate the most after "Enjoy!" (But I couldn't bring myself to use that. Imagine, putting pleasure in the imperative like that! When I sleep in a hotel, I even deny myself breakfast in bed, one of my great pleasures, phobic beforehand of the dreadful image of a waiter bending over my bed with his tray, spewing out this obscenity with a smile: "Enjo-o-o-o-y...".)

The worst is yet to come. Tomorrow, Wednesday, September 21, I must get down to business and start smiling.

HAVE A NICE DAY



Phone Booth

Arrival time: 12 P.M. Yesterday's two pigs are now five. Everything seems to indicate that this is in fact their corner. I decide to avoid eye contact.

10 P.M. Visitor #1, in his fifties, wearing a gray suit, tries to make a call from the left booth. It doesn't work. He grabs my phone, but something must be bothering him because his body is still stationed in the left-hand booth. I feel rejected. I decide to force him to move by pretending that I need the left-hand phone. He resists. I push him a little. I listen to his side of the conversation: "I need one, you got any?"—three seconds of silence—"Yes"—silence—"No"—silence—"Maybe"—silence—"No"—silence—"I'll do it"—silence—"I'll try again tomorrow ... yes ... see you." He used my phone for about one minute. Tomorrow I must buy a stop-watch. I should also wire tap my phone (Paul wrote: "... pick one spot and begin to think of it as yours ..."). I sit down on the left-hand chair and wait.

12:25 P.M. Visitor #2, female. I listen: "Hey, it's me." Silence. "I'm at work." Silence. "Listen, honey, lunch will be difficult." Silence. "But we can do it any other time." Long silence. "Oh ... I'd better go now ... Yeah, yeah, I love you, too." She hangs up, turns toward me, points at the booth, and says: "Somebody must be mourning. I guess someone died." She doesn't wait for my response and leaves. Length of phone call: about three minutes.

For the next thirty-five minutes there are no customers. Four men and two women stop to look. Four times I am asked if I am in charge of the booth, and after answering no, I receive the following comments:

"It's vandalism."

"Maybe this is a homeless person's little place."

At 1 P.M., having finished my shift, I leave.





Made four sandwiches: three containing ham, cheese, and tomato, one containing cheese and tomato for vegetarians. All four of them kept in waxed paper bags.

3 P.M., West Broadway and Worth: first smile, a little contrived and not too successful, at a man who tightened his lips in response. I should follow Paul's suggestion of smiling only at women. Not because men are pigs, but because this way I'll reduce drastically the amount of smiling I have to do.

Second fruitless attempt a few yards on. No answer. My first woman's smile happens on the corner of Spring and Mercer streets. I forget to talk with her. In my mind I rehearse so as to be ready the next time round:

"Hello. Too bad winter is coming."

"Hello. Too bad summer is ending."

It's really not so complicated. Fourth attempt on Spring and Lafayette. No answer. I feel like slapping her.

Between Mott and Mulberry a tall elderly man with a long white beard and coffee in hand walks toward me. He smiles at me. He stops to talk with me about the weather: "Hello lady, beautiful day!" Maybe another disciple of Paul's *Gotham Handbook*. I smile back. He tells me he was a volunteer for the Salvation Army. Went to Vietnam. Was in charge of taking food overseas during the war. Made a lot of money. Twenty years ago it cost him ten dollars for chicken cacciatore. Lived on Madison Street. Worked as a tour guide, in a drugstore, in a coffee-roasting plant, for city housing projects, drove a truck, made a fortune, worked seven days a week, gave it all to his people: sister, brother-in-law, niece, grand-niece, and grand-nephew.

He was in Mexico City. In two years he'll get his SSR (Social Security and retirement). The city will be giving him money. After ten minutes he ends his monolog: "Let me go, I have to wake up these old bones. Enjoy America. If you have any trouble, there's a Salvation Army on the Bowery. Go there and I'll show you around." Then he walks away. He did all the work: he smiled, talked about the

weather. The only thing he missed was offering me a cigarette. I have to buy two counters to keep track of the smiles given and the smiles received.

In front of 255 Bowery, I meet a bum with a Palestinian scarf. I smile. He says, "Hello," but doesn't slow down. There's no time even to talk about the weather.

An old man with a cane and cigar comes by. Here goes: "What a beautiful day for a walk." He ignores the weather subject and starts talking. He lives in the building right here. Was born in Puerto Rico. He mumbles something or other about the Korean War. Takes out his wallet, shows me his grandchildren. I jump at the opportunity for a compliment: "They are lovely." It's not too difficult. I go on: "What a nice hat you have." And, "These are such nice photos." And, "What a beautiful cane." (I really have to find new adjectives.) He stops the conversation with a sudden goodbye. I continue walking in the direction of the East Village, ready to start operation SANDWICHES.

Tompkins Square Park: some of the men are sleeping on benches. None of the others asks me for anything. It is the first time I find myself complaining about the lack of hungry people, of "clients", you might say. I walk down Ninth Street and find out that I have some competition: Trinity Lutheran Church gives out free food and drink. I have to move to another neighborhood.

A man pushing a baby in a stroller asks for fifty cents. I offer him a sandwich: "Ham or just cheese?" "I'll take them both."

Now I am all caught up with giving out sandwiches and I completely forget to smile. I get a grip and smile at a man who answers, "Very nice", then another who says, "Sweetie". I thank him, but I've always done that, even before Paul's instructions. I can't resist compliments from men. It's 5 P.M. and I have two sandwiches left. I decide to call it a day, however poor the results:

These statistics will be more precise tomorrow, with the help of a counter and a watch.

I go to a spy store. They say there is no way a private individual can wire tap a public phone and pick up the distant party. The dealer suggests that I use instead a small microphone directed toward the booth to follow what is being said over the apparatus from a distance—all this for two thousand dollars. Given my natural inclinations, it would not be a good thing for me to possess such an object. Who knows what use I might put it to on more private occasions. I must not risk it. Instead, I choose a small tape recorder, which I will fix under the phone. One hour of recording—enough for my daily shifts. Two years of prison for wire tapping a public phone, they said. I have a fantasy: I am arrested, I stand before the judge. He proposes an alternative punishment: smile, distribute food, and talk to people. I say: "No! I prefer jail!"

I am already wondering how my phone booth is doing, anxious and excited about tomorrow's hour. I have never been able to resist orders.

During the night, I pay it a visit. I also take the opportunity to paste the word "ENJOY" in black letters on the right side of the booth. I leave, reassured and serene. I have had visits from three visibly satisfied clients.

That evening I re-read *Gotham Handbook* and realize that I am not supposed to wait for people to ask for something; it's up to me to decide who is in need. Before I fall asleep, I dial my booth phone number: 285-9134. Not in service for incoming calls.



Phone Booth

Arrival time: 12 P.M. Cold, windy morning. The Coca-Cola can that served as a vase is missing. There is one cigarette butt in the ashtray. I install the tape recorder under the phone and sit on the left-hand chair as if I were expecting a call. Between 12 P.M. and 1 P.M., nine telephone calls are made:

Call #1: "Let me talk to Castello. ... Vinny here, I need forty-five inches and the same for the other side. ... I need tools and ladders. There's no ladders in the place, it's all screwed up. ... Yeah, make it six feet long. ... I need two of 'em. ... Otherwise I'm not gonna do it. ... I need those valves to finish this shit. ... Yeah, two-inch will be alright. ... I'm losing time. I need the ladder. Today. ... Now? ... It's after twelve. ... That's it. ... I need it now. ... Shit." Total time of conversation: seventy seconds.

Call #2: "It's Sonya. ... Just stay there. I'll come to you. ... Don't move, just stay there. I'll come to you." Twenty-five seconds.

Call #3: "I'm downstairs. ... I'll see you then." Twelve seconds.

Call #4: Six attempts before abandoning.

Call #5: No answer.

Call #6: "Why didn't you call last night? ... That's not true. ... 'Cause I don't believe you. You're always pulling the same shit on me. ... There's a thousand phones in this city, what do you mean? ... Look, if you wanted the stuff, you should have called me. ... Yeah, it's still here. ... I know

it's yours. ... That's what I mean. You better come tonight or you'll find it on the sidewalk, along with that stupid cat. ... Leave her out of this. ... We'll talk about it tonight. Be on time. Listen, man, if you're not on time. ... That's it. Just be there." Eight minutes, nine seconds.

Call #7: "Yo, Mickey ... I'm on Harrison and Greenwich. ... What was the number? ... No, man, I've been circling around, can't find the place. ... Listen, you find the number. ... I'll call you back in three minutes. Don't take long, man. ... Okay." Twenty-seven seconds.

Call #8: (same as #7): "It's me. ... 463 Harrison ...". Nine seconds.

Call #9: A conversation in a language I don't recognize. Of the nine callers, five didn't seem to notice anything strange.

A young black man stops in front of the booth: "It's a good humanitarian gesture," he says.

Another says he wouldn't want to "mess up this set-up, man. They got everything here. It's a nice little sweet home."

One of the pigs approaches me and asks if his friend can take a photo of us together. I agree and smile. It's part of the deal.

At 12:55 P.M. a man runs up and grabs a rose. He says it's for a lady. He suggests I add whiskey and cushions.

At 1 P.M. I finish my shift. Before leaving, I add six white roses, popcorn, and mints.



Talking, Smiles, Food, & Cigarettes

3 P.M., 42nd Street between Lexington and Third.
I give my first sandwich to a man who asks for money. He opens it, smells it, looks at it, spits twice, and begins to eat. I smile but I don't start the weather conversation.

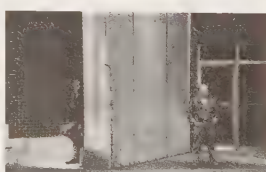
I inaugurate my counter in the subway, Line Six: I smile fourteen times, to no effect. At last, a man in a good-looking tailored suit smiles back at me. I ask, "What are you thinking about?" He answers that he's thinking about his tailor. I ask him why. He says he is not happy with the work: buttons too small, pants too narrow. I learn that his tailor lives on Hester Street; he sees him once every two months; he doesn't know how many suits he owns because there are those he wears and those he doesn't; his name is Magadi and he is from Mali. He asks if he is the most frivolous man I have met today. And I answer he is the most charming. He stops the conversation by getting off at Canal Street. It lasted fifteen minutes. More than twelve smiles were exchanged between us.

A man asks for a cigarette. I give him the choice between my four brands. He chooses the menthol ones but refuses the sandwich. I smile and say he has a nice hat. He asks if I am American. I say yes. (Why do I say yes?) He ends the conversation by saying, "I have to go. Have a nice day." Duration of conversation: thirty seconds. One smile given, one smile received.

I spend the next hour trying unsuccessfully to make up my mind about who looks hungry or not. There is a Chinese man looking desperate, sitting on the steps of the Canal Street Citibank. I ask him if he'd care for a sandwich. He takes it. He seems too sad to answer my smile. I tell him I still have two sandwiches left. He nods, puts them in his pocket, then thanks me with a bow.

End of the day.





Arrival time: 12 P.M. Weather: gray and drizzly. Missing: three white roses, the ashtray, the popcorn, the "Y" of "ENJOY", and the "HAVE A NICE DAY" sign. (I replace it immediately with a pair of eyes which I had in reserve.) I add one box of Kleenex, a bag of potato chips, some cigarettes, a container of orange juice, paper cups, a bouquet of white daisies, and a "Comments" sheet on which I write: "Dear Guest: Thank you for having chosen this phone booth. Your comments help us to assure the standards you expect and deserve."

Between 12 and 1 P.M., four phone calls are made:

Call #1: "I mean, this is so much pressure on us now. No, at this point here. ... No! Let me speak, alright? Then what I'm going to do, I'm going to mix some epoxy with the cement. And I'll make it like a soup. You know what I'm saying? Then I'll paint it on. ... For tomorrow morning, to paint that stuff on. But find out, check out if you can do it. ... Chop that, have that order done, because I'm afraid someone's gonna get hurt."

Okay, I'll see you then in about thirty-five minutes. ... Okay. Hey, Angie, Anthony left right away? ... And he's not here yet, wasting more time, right?" Total time of conversation: two minutes, ten seconds. Before he goes, the user looks at me and asks: "Is this your living room?"

I smile. I ask if he likes it.

"I don't know. It looks like a cemetery."

I smile. He leaves.

Call #2: "Yeah, hello? Hello? Yeah, I'm ready. ... It's Phyllis here, send me a car to Harrison and Greenwich." Total time: twenty seconds.

Caller #2 takes one of my cigarettes, sits down on my chair, and says: "Nice, very nice. I love it. I'm gonna leave some quarters in the booth, in case someone needs them." Then she starts to tell me her life story. I learn that she lives in a building nearby. She comes from Little Italy. Her mom owns a restaurant on Mulberry Street, but she has to take care of business because her mom's a heavy alcoholic. Then her car arrives. She says: "Okay, lady, nice meeting you. Goodbye." I smile. She leaves, and forgets to leave the quarters.

Calls #3 and #4 concern appointments. Non-callers also comment.

"What is it for?" one guy asks another.

"It's vandalism," he answers.

"Oh, is that what it's for?"

Another man asks me, "Is it a shrine? Did someone die here?"

I'm asked to beautify a place and everybody thinks it's like a tomb! Since most of the time I am there sitting on the left-hand chair, six people want to know if I am the lady of the house. I say no, but I smile. I decide to assume possession of the place.

One woman suggests I add a comb and a brush, and maybe cologne, too. One man wants whiskey. A child says to his mother, "It's strange."

"Good strange or bad strange?" she asks.

"Sort of in the middle," he replies.

"Are you missing a 'y'?" asks a man.

"At first I thought someone died on this spot," says one woman.

"I can't help it," I answer.

"Wherever I go it always turns out like that."

At the end of my shift I even chat with one of the pigs.



YOUR FRIEND

DRINK WATER FIRST...
Mel's Orange Juice is a delicious refreshment.

Mel's
ALL NATURAL
ORANGE
JUICE





Talking, Smiles, Food, & Cigarettes

3:30 P.M., Church Street.
A man is sitting on a stairway,
listening to a yellow, water-
resistant, portable radio. I smile
and say: "That's a great coat ...
well, I like the way you wear it ...
I have an extra sandwich, would
you like it?"

He shakes his head: "Oh, no,
it's way past lunch time for me.
I don't eat past 2."

"What about cigarettes?
I have this choice ...".

He points at the Marlboros
and I hand him the pack. "I'll
keep them for later," he says.

I try to keep the conversation
going: "What are you listening to?"

"That nut, Rush Limbaugh—
listen to him every day at the same
time. I listen to everything."

He smiles. I smile. Starting a
conversation about that right-
winger Rush Limbaugh is beyond
the call of duty. I leave.

A man with a faded Dick Tracy
baseball cap is walking down

Hudson. He is pushing a cart
full of different types of metal.
He smiles at me. I smile back.
He starts the conversation:

"Hello lady!"

"Hello. Good hat! How are you?"

"Just working hard, lady."

"If you're hungry, I have an
extra sandwich." Without a word
he takes it. "Would you like two?"

He takes the second one.

There follow seven minutes of
conversation that he ends with:
"Yes, okay, well goodbye." I learn
that iron is two cents a pound
in New York City but twenty
cents in Brooklyn. Aluminum
is thirty-five cents, "but you don't
find aluminum around the city.
Got to go out to Jersey."

End of the day.

Phone Booth

Arrival time: 12 P.M. Weather:
humid and gray. There is a wicker
trash receptacle on the ground.
Source unknown. The "Comments"
sheet is full and reads:

*Missing brush, comb, lipstick,
and cologne
Leave some quarters
I think it's cool
Està muy chévere Fedex
It's great, Love it—Maria M
Fabulous concept
Great scheme
Great, except cigarettes kill—Stone
I think whoever did this is a fucking
dick-head and probably has no job.
Get a life you stupid bitch. DAVE
Dave is an asshole
Cool man I like this a lot keep it
up—Love, Jaz
Who the fuck put this faggot
bullshit here?
More cigs
I love it
Who would eat this?*

Missing: one rose and the pack
of cigarettes. Additions: one
pack of Winstons, carnations,
Smartfood popcorn, candy, and
a new "Comments" sheet.



comments. 

 complaints or
suggestions 



please write; there's a
phone. ~~BE~~ Ben

~~only~~ - only brush - ~~not~~

~~I think the~~

Esta may cleverer ~~than~~

Fabulous concept,

Great scheme ~~for~~

~~except~~ except cigarettes kill. ~~love it!~~

I think whoever did this is a fucking

~~DICKHEAD. PROBABLY HAS NO JOB~~

~~GET A LIFE YOU STUPID BITCH!~~

Cici man - DAVE IS AN ASSHOLE

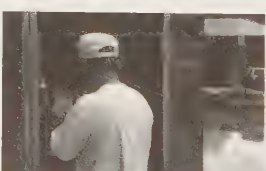
WHO THE FUCK PUT THIS

~~I~~ ~~LOVE~~ ~~IT~~ ~~WHO~~ ~~WOULD~~ ~~EAT~~ ~~IT~~

~~LOVE~~ ~~IT~~ ~~WHO~~ ~~WOULD~~ ~~EAT~~ ~~IT~~

~~LOVE~~ ~~IT~~ ~~WHO~~ ~~WOULD~~ ~~EAT~~ ~~IT~~





Seven phone calls are made during my shift. Among them:

Call #6: "Shi-i-i-ite, man, this phone's outta here. ... No, man, see what I'm saying? There's cigarettes, paper, pens, flowers. ... In the booth, yeah. Fuck, it's wild. You got to pick her up, you know what I'm saying? ... You know what I'm saying, man? ... Listen, if you don't pick her up, I won't have time to get ready, you know what I'm saying? You know what I'm saying? Gotta be there on time. You know what I'm saying? Yeah, you know what I'm saying? She's gonna be waiting for me man. If you go, you gotta go on time. See what I'm saying? She's gonna be waiting to see me. See what I'm saying? No, but you see what I'm saying, man? See what I'm saying? ... Dope, yeah. She's dope. See what I'm saying? You see what I'm saying? I gotta go, I'm working. See ya tonight, but be there man, see what I'm saying?" Total time of conversation: six minutes.

Call #7: "Betty? Yes. So, how's it going? ... But you should expect that. ... Of course you should. Yes, you know you should. You're just in denial. ... Well, why not? ... What do you mean the universe? It's not letting you do what? ... But you are part of it, so just blend with it. Stop fighting it. Let go. ... It's like ... but you should just allow yourself to go

through it. Listen, I gotta go. No, you're not bringing me down. Listen, Lenny just got here. I got to go but I'll call as soon as I can."

I am still not able to assume possession of my home. I have divided the work and cannot combine the talking and smiling part with the phone booth. I carry out the assignment like a bureaucrat. Step by step. I log my hours.

Pig #1 drives by in a red convertible Mercedes. Pig #2 comes by wearing a T-shirt that says: "This grandpa has a five-star rating." I ask if he is a grandfather. He nods. "A grandfather and you're still flirting in the streets?"

He tells me a neighborhood story: Yesterday, someone found a woman in the back of a truck near the river. Raped and killed. He saw her and said the smell was very bad. She had been there for at least one week, strangled and stabbed repeatedly, a young jogger. "These women don't understand," he concludes.

There is a crowd looking into the booth. "What's the purpose?" asks a woman.

"It's a gag," says the pig.

"Unbelievable. The only thing you're missing now is a bathroom," she replies.

"She'll think of something," he declares.

A man in a black suit stops and inquires: "Is it a grand opening?"
1 P.M. End of shift.

Talking, Smiles, Food, & Cigarettes

1:15 P.M., corner of Hudson and Northmore. I give my first sandwich to a black man with dreadlocks selling used magazines and books. I say, "Do you want a sandwich? I've got an extra one."

"Oh, I just ate. But I'll take one for later."

I tell him his pants are cool and ask if he has a lot of customers.

"Not since I moved around the corner."

He moved because there was a roof leak where he used to be. He says he enjoys science magazines about numerology and horoscopes, says it will rain until Sunday night then sunny until Wednesday then rain again. He keeps up with the weather because he works outside. He ends the conversation suddenly by saying, "Goodbye." Duration of the meeting: eight minutes. Six smiles exchanged.

1:35 P.M., West Broadway. I offer sandwich #2 to a woman sitting in a stairway. She accepts without a word.

6:30 P.M., on the corner of Canal and Thompson. A young man is digging through a dumpster.

I ask if he wants a sandwich. He replies, "How did you know I was hungry?" I smile. He smiles.

6:35 P.M., West Broadway. A man in his fifties is daydreaming on a bench. I offer him a sandwich and he says, "Yes, but more than anything it's you that I want." I say it is more complicated to get me.

"But I want you."

"You won't get me."

"I know, but I want you."

I give up: "We'll see about that tomorrow," and he answers, "You always say the same thing," and then starts laughing loudly.

The conversation lasted one minute. I end it after four smiles and one outburst of laughter.

Tomorrow is Sunday. I decide to hire someone else to smile for me. I choose D, who wrote a book about the philosophy of good manners. He agrees to replace me.



Phone Booth

Following my instruction, D changes the water in the vases, replaces the empty bottle of orange juice, adds a pack of Carltons, a *Time* magazine with O J Simpson on the cover, two new postcards, a comb, matches. He refuses, however, to set up the tape recorder. His report:

"Arrival at 2:45 P.M. Nobody looks at me, maybe because it would be invasive. They don't seem to ignore me but choose to leave me to my own little space. People can be very polite, more polite than curious, even. It's surprising that people are no longer interested by this booth. In a way, those who don't look are more interesting. I am apprehensive but maybe passers-by are going to be nicer to me than I expect. More generous to me than I am to them, because I have an obligation to be kind and friendly whereas they don't. I am still amazed by those who don't come up to the booth to see what's happening. I wonder what I have to do to attract them. Maybe if there were a hanged man or something."

D leaves at 4 P.M. The "Comments" sheet is full.

Someone also taped their own "Comments" sheet, which reads:

Great, except you should replace sunflower seeds for the cigarettes! I stopped smoking on cardiologist's demand but caved in when I found these Winstons and took one! [illegible signature] + son, Truckers



1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. 101. 102. 103. 104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. 111. 112. 113. 114. 115. 116. 117. 118. 119. 120. 121. 122. 123. 124. 125. 126. 127. 128. 129. 130. 131. 132. 133. 134. 135. 136. 137. 138. 139. 140. 141. 142. 143. 144. 145. 146. 147. 148. 149. 150. 151. 152. 153. 154. 155. 156. 157. 158. 159. 160. 161. 162. 163. 164. 165. 166. 167. 168. 169. 170. 171. 172. 173. 174. 175. 176. 177. 178. 179. 180. 181. 182. 183. 184. 185. 186. 187. 188. 189. 190. 191. 192. 193. 194. 195. 196. 197. 198. 199. 200. 201. 202. 203. 204. 205. 206. 207. 208. 209. 210. 211. 212. 213. 214. 215. 216. 217. 218. 219. 220. 221. 222. 223. 224. 225. 226. 227. 228. 229. 230. 231. 232. 233. 234. 235. 236. 237. 238. 239. 240. 241. 242. 243. 244. 245. 246. 247. 248. 249. 250. 251. 252. 253. 254. 255. 256. 257. 258. 259. 260. 261. 262. 263. 264. 265. 266. 267. 268. 269. 270. 271. 272. 273. 274. 275. 276. 277. 278. 279. 280. 281. 282. 283. 284. 285. 286. 287. 288. 289. 290. 291. 292. 293. 294. 295. 296. 297. 298. 299. 300. 301. 302. 303. 304. 305. 306. 307. 308. 309. 310. 311. 312. 313. 314. 315. 316. 317. 318. 319. 320. 321. 322. 323. 324. 325. 326. 327. 328. 329. 330. 331. 332. 333. 334. 335. 336. 337. 338. 339. 340. 341. 342. 343. 344. 345. 346. 347. 348. 349. 350. 351. 352. 353. 354. 355. 356. 357. 358. 359. 360. 361. 362. 363. 364. 365. 366. 367. 368. 369. 370. 371. 372. 373. 374. 375. 376. 377. 378. 379. 380. 381. 382. 383. 384. 385. 386. 387. 388. 389. 390. 391. 392. 393. 394. 395. 396. 397. 398. 399. 400. 401. 402. 403. 404. 405. 406. 407. 408. 409. 410. 411. 412. 413. 414. 415. 416. 417. 418. 419. 420. 421. 422. 423. 424. 425. 426. 427. 428. 429. 430. 431. 432. 433. 434. 435. 436. 437. 438. 439. 440. 441. 442. 443. 444. 445. 446. 447. 448. 449. 450. 451. 452. 453. 454. 455. 456. 457. 458. 459. 460. 461. 462. 463. 464. 465. 466. 467. 468. 469. 470. 471. 472. 473. 474. 475. 476. 477. 478. 479. 480. 481. 482. 483. 484. 485. 486. 487. 488. 489. 490. 491. 492. 493. 494. 495. 496. 497. 498. 499. 500. 501. 502. 503. 504. 505. 506. 507. 508. 509. 510. 511. 512. 513. 514. 515. 516. 517. 518. 519. 520. 521. 522. 523. 524. 525. 526. 527. 528. 529. 530. 531. 532. 533. 534. 535. 536. 537. 538. 539. 540. 541. 542. 543. 544. 545. 546. 547. 548. 549. 550. 551. 552. 553. 554. 555. 556. 557. 558. 559. 560. 561. 562. 563. 564. 565. 566. 567. 568. 569. 570. 571. 572. 573. 574. 575. 576. 577. 578. 579. 580. 581. 582. 583. 584. 585. 586. 587. 588. 589. 590. 591. 592. 593. 594. 595. 596. 597. 598. 599. 600. 601. 602. 603. 604. 605. 606. 607. 608. 609. 610. 611. 612. 613. 614. 615. 616. 617. 618. 619. 620. 621. 622. 623. 624. 625. 626. 627. 628. 629. 630. 631. 632. 633. 634. 635. 636. 637. 638. 639. 640. 641. 642. 643. 644. 645. 646. 647. 648. 649. 650. 651. 652. 653. 654. 655. 656. 657. 658. 659. 660. 661. 662. 663. 664. 665. 666. 667. 668. 669. 670. 671. 672. 673. 674. 675. 676. 677. 678. 679. 680. 681. 682. 683. 684. 685. 686. 687. 688. 689. 690. 691. 692. 693. 694. 695. 696. 697. 698. 699. 700. 701. 702. 703. 704. 705. 706. 707. 708. 709. 710. 711. 712. 713. 714. 715. 716. 717. 718. 719. 720. 721. 722. 723. 724. 725. 726. 727. 728. 729. 730. 731. 732. 733. 734. 735. 736. 737. 738. 739. 740. 741. 742. 743. 744. 745. 746. 747. 748. 749. 750. 751. 752. 753. 754. 755. 756. 757. 758. 759. 760. 761. 762. 763. 764. 765. 766. 767. 768. 769. 770. 771. 772. 773. 774. 775. 776. 777. 778. 779. 780. 781. 782. 783. 784. 785. 786. 787. 788. 789. 790. 791. 792. 793. 794. 795. 796. 797. 798. 799. 800. 801. 802. 803. 804. 805. 806. 807. 808. 809. 810. 811. 812. 813. 814. 815. 816. 817. 818. 819. 820. 821. 822. 823. 824. 825. 826. 827. 828. 829. 830. 831. 832. 833. 834. 835. 836. 837. 838. 839. 840. 84

great, except you should
REPLACE SUNFLOWER SEEDS
FOR THE LIGNETTES!

I STOPPED SMOKING
ON CARDIOLOGISTS DEMAND
BUT CAVED IN WHEN
I FOUND THESE WINATA
+ TOOK ONE!

Jim Lello
+ Son
THANKS!





Talking, Smiles, Food, & Cigarettes

D's report: "So many people on the streets seem to be going nowhere. Two men refuse a sandwich on Hudson Street. Maybe on Sunday it's more difficult to find people who look hungry.

"The third man I approach is sitting on the stairway of a bank that is on the corner of Spring and Lafayette. Red swollen face. I come near him and he says, 'What do you want?' I'm taken by surprise because he seems so aggressive. But if I think of it differently, it was I who was aggressive by coming up to him. I act contrary to my nature, which would have me leave a place where I've been aggressed. I offer him a sandwich. He doesn't want one, but he takes the cigarettes. He sits down to smoke his first one and ignores me completely. 'I'm not hungry, I'm not hungry. I don't want anything to eat.' He says thank you but doesn't say goodbye. I forget to smile. I see two young men on White Street. I smile and so do they. Actually, I don't know if it is I who smiled first. Good, it's working. My smile must be convincing. They also accept two sandwiches and a pack of cigarettes and then tell

me to have a good day. I give three small smiles but they are good quality.

"The park is full of people who seem to be homeless. With only two sandwiches left, I suddenly have all these choices. I feel so guilty that I can't give each one something. This act of benevolence makes me feel guilty. I pick out a couple. I have always been a sucker for couples who seem to have been together for a long time. I smile. I go over to them and ask if they'd like a sandwich. She says, 'Okay,' and takes it. I hand the last one to the man but it makes me feel horrible because it is a little wet. Maybe the tomato went through the bread, I'm not sure. In any case, I suddenly feel like my sandwiches are not good enough. I don't want to disrupt their peace with conversation. I also leave them the whole pack of Marlboros. They are excited and thank me. I smile but they don't."



Arrival time: 12 P.M. The flowers are all over the floor, but it doesn't seem like an act of aggression. Maybe the wind. The candies are gone. Apart from that, everything else is intact. The day is humid, cloudy but warm. The "Comments" sheet is full. I feel strangely proud when I read:

This is scary! Too scary!
Very nice good going Julie M
This is terrific, but I'm thirsty. Where's the drink?
I like Pepsi!
Only an artist would think to do something like this—
always the need to improve on something as well as the
need to create beauty, comfort, and need to give a sense
of dimension to the simple things in life
Wonderful—who did it?
Very good. A true New Yorker!
Great idea, Shoulda took a picture. What will they
think of next?
Do this all over every phone booth!
I think this is great but the cigarettes are a bad idea,
Kinshas C
Why did you do this? It's weird but kind of nice.
I like the generosity of it. It is unusual to do. If you're
trying to be discovered, it's far less interesting
This is really awesome
This is so cool. I like it. Alex K
The greatest thing I ever seen in NY
Yes it is so lovely. I like it myself. Keep up the
good work!

Missing: the orange juice, five out of fifteen cups, eleven out of twenty cigarettes, all but one piece of candy, and the popcorn. Added: bananas, *Newsday*, ten cups, corn chips, Volvic water, Coca-Cola, a red pen, candy, and a "Y" to the word "ENJOY".

Six calls are made between 12 and 1 P.M., three concerning appointments, two concerning business. I keep Call #2:

"No, I'm not accusing you, I'm asking you. ... It's just that Vinny got mad and he star-sixty-nined and got your answering machine. ... What do you know? How do I know I listened to it? ... Well, he didn't know it was your phone, but I did. ... Just don't call if you're gonna hang up, it's dumb. ... Yeah, right! Somebody else called my house at midnight, used your phone. ... Ritchie, stop lying. ... Bullshit. ... No, I'm not mad. I already told you. But just don't call me. I'll call you, okay? ... I'll see you. ... Yes, the same place. ... Bye."

Caller #3 reads the news sitting on the chair. Stays five minutes then leaves.

While I am at the phone booth, a conversation starts between two old women:

"Ill ... people are ill. I can't believe it, someone is ill, I can't believe it."

"What happened there?"

"I don't know, someone got killed here, maybe."

"Why don't you use it?"

"Nah! It's bad luck."

"Why?"

"That's what I think. It's kinda weird."

"So why would it be bad luck?"

"I don't know. It's someone else's phone."

"I don't want to use it. It's private property."

"Oh, so out of respect."

"It's like a waiting room."

"A waiting room?"

"Sure. Magazines, cigarettes."

"I think it's the drug dealers. You know the drug dealers ... They must have put this shit up."

"Do they take it down every day?"

"No, they leave it up there."

"Nah, this wouldn't last overnight."

"Whose operation is this?"

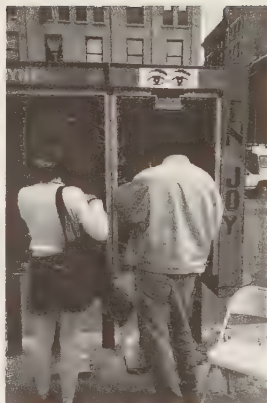
"It's been here for a week."

"You mean nobody in this rag town takes it out? I can't believe that."

A woman comes and shouts that she's the chairman of the community board: "Do you have a permit to do what you did to this phone? From the telephone company or Community Board #1? Are you responsible for this? Someone said that you people were doing this every day. Do you have a permit to do this?"

I stay silent and, as my shift is over, I leave.









Talking, Smiles, Food, & Cigarettes

First refusal from a man by the name of Miguel Angel.

"Hello, *linda*," he says, "I'm from Santander, near Cadiz."

"Yes, I know Cadiz," I tell him.

"Oh, well, I never went there."

"You never went there?" (I already sense that this is going to be a long conversation, and I am not mistaken.)

"No, I never went there. It's the only place in Europe I never went to. To my motherland, I haven't been ... 'cause they weren't in the war. I was over there during the war. In Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, North of Africa. In '42."

"Was it good?" (I have no idea why I ask this absurd question, but I do.)

"God, how could it be good? It was the war. We were fighting. There was a German general; we called him the Fox of the Desert."

I offer him a sandwich. He wants to know what is in it: "Ham-tomato, pâté, or cheese-tomato."

"No," he says. "Next time make one with olive oil, tomato, lettuce, and rye bread."

A conversation concerning his resistance to cold weather follows. After fifteen minutes, I feel it has lasted long enough. The man doesn't seem to share my lassitude. I remember Paul's words: "Try to keep these conversations going as long as you can," but they have no effect on me. I decide to disobey: I cut him off and leave.

A man with no teeth and bright red skin is the first to smile at me. I ask if he wants a sandwich.

"Okay, I got to stay on a diet. Any meat in that sandwich? 'Cause nothing beats beef."

He accepts the ham.

"Okay, so I'll let you go, thank you, and we'll get together again." He says this last sentence winking his eye.

I offer the second sandwich and a pack of cigarettes to a man sitting in the park, and the third to an old man with a hat, carrying two plastic bags full of old paper and bits of cardboard. "Hello sir, I have an extra sandwich."

"What?"

"A sandwich."

"You want money for a sandwich?"

"No, do you want a sandwich, I have one too many."

"Why, do I look so poor?"

"No, but I was just wondering ..."

"Do I look so poor? I don't really want to eat any more. I'm gonna go home. I got a bagel and some soup. That's enough for me, thanks a lot. Do I look so poor?"

"No, but I have too much food, I couldn't finish it."

"Well, okay. I'll give it to my lawyer then."

"To whom?"

"To my lawyer. Yes, they're stealing my sister's estate. I'll give it to him. Yeah, my sister's estate. I need someone to handle it."

I hand him the sandwich.

"Yeah, I'll give it to him." Then he leaves.

I offer the last sandwich and a pack of cigarettes to a man with piles of bags and blankets around him. He began by launching into a monolog:

"Wait a minute, let me tell you, Mayor Koch I'm gonna tell you one thing. You know the Mayor, what's his name, the Mayor of Luke, New Jersey. James Chap. You know what James Chap did? They only had one market, well he had another market built. Yes ma'am. He made it. Middle Street Market, he made it. Wait a minute. The lady used to have a concession down there. He built one and that man is ready. He's ready. He's James Chap. His name is James Chap, and he got it. He's doing his thing. Yes ma'am. That man is something else."

I try a timid "Yes, okay, I'll see you."

He stops me and says: "Now you wait a minute, come over here." And he starts all over again. It lasts twenty minutes. I keep a constant smile throughout.

Phone Booth

Arrival time: 12 P.M. Weather: rain. Missing: two of the three bunches of flowers, "O" from "ENJOY", box of Kleenex, cigarettes, comb, ashtray, one postcard, orange juice, candies, popcorn, paper cups, pen, and the "Comments" sheet.

My friend, Richard, from the gang of pigs, comes over and shows me the trash can. In it are all the missing items. He tells me that this act of vandalism was perpetrated by the telephone company. They are now also

looking for me.

This is the sign. I had been waiting to put an end to this assignment. The weather is also on my side: the day is funeral.

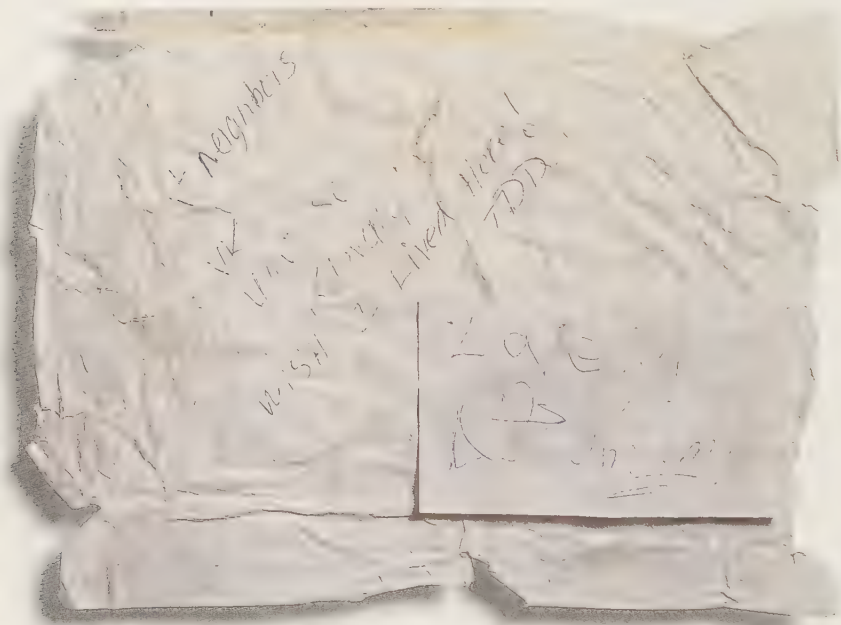
Richard fills me in on one more neighborhood death story. This time it's an old lady who had been dead in her bed for two weeks. It was the mailman who noticed that her mail was accumulating, so he forced the door open and found her. There, too, the smell was really bad.

One comment stuck to the

phone reads "Lovely! UM UM!" I read the others on the "Comments" sheet in the trash:

*This is Bullshit & fucked up.
Please take this motherfucker down
Ignorance surrounds us all
[in reference to the comment above]
This is great, I love it, but the
bananas are gone
Neighbors thank you so kindly.
Wish I lived here! TDD*

I come back one hour later and post the following notice in the booth:



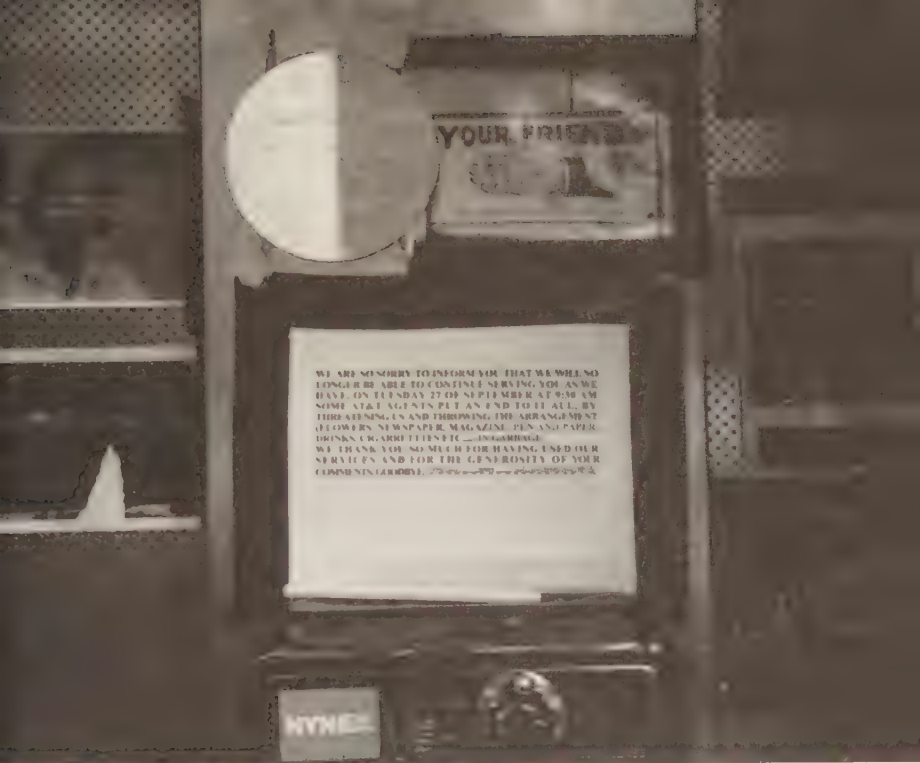


PLEASE
WRITE YOUR COMMENTS AND
SUGGESTIONS OR COMPLAINTS:

Try to be
honest
and
clear
in
your
writing
and
be
specific
in
your
comments
and
suggestions
or
complaints



"We are so sorry to inform you that we will
we have. On Tuesday 27 of September at 9:
all by threatening us and throwing the armor
and paper, drinks, cigarettes, etc.) in the garbage
services and for the generosity of our community



longer be able to continue serving you as
 some AT&T agents put in and took
 in (flowers, newspaper, magazine, pen
 & thank you so much for having used our
 service.



Talking, Smiles, Food, & Cigarettes

10 A.M., West Broadway below Canal. "I have an extra sandwich, would you like it?" He takes it and leaves. No time to smile.

First refusal, on Canal Street. "Excuse me, sir I have an extra sandwich."

"No, it's alright, thank you. You got a cigarette? I want a cigarette, that's all."

I am out of stock and go to the nearest shop and buy a pack of Camels and a pack of Marlboros. He chooses the pack of Marlboros and starts talking. It lasts fifty-three minutes and forty seconds. I do not stop him. I know it is my last day and my last chance to obey. It starts like this:

"He's gonna catch up with you, God. God will let you know. They said he was loco in a mental hospital, me know he grow up as a dummy in Goodwin, Boston. She come from England. Her name is Bobby. She drank a lot."

I try to understand and ask, "Who is Bobby?"

"Bobby? She's supposed to be the mother of the baby."

"Your baby?"

"No, me."

"Oh, she's your mother?"

"She left with the pocket book and forget about the rest of us, yeah."

"Oh, but that was long ago, wasn't it?"

"No, these are Italians, Italians ...".

"You're Italian?"

"No. I grew up here and shit and then I got shot, but I watched television and God. But see, they don't know. Reverend is from England. My mother don't tell me this. She grow up with Italians, she like Italians, she don't understand the rest of us and television, the mental hospital. This is low-class America. They don't understand the rest of us. He takes the store and forgets about the rest of us then he's gonna send me back to Stamford and

they're gonna give me pills in the mental hospital.

These are Spanish people, anyway. They would not believe me if I told them, anyway. He is Spanish and he's a faggot."

His last words are: "God is doing all the work and he's trying to tell me that I'm loco, and he's trying to take off with all the goods." And he goes. One smile at the beginning. One at the end. But I forget to smile during the conversation. Still, it is a fine way to end.

I clock up my second refusal of the day with a man in a blue hat walking down Broadway: "Hello. What a beautiful hat you have. I have an extra sandwich. Do you want it?" He smiles but doesn't stop. I could have tried to start a conversation but I am still tired from the last one so I just let it go, although of course I smile back.

Sandwich #2 to a past acquaintance. The man with the yellow water-resistant radio.

Sandwich #3 to a man sitting on a bench on Thompson Street. He asks me for money. I offer a sandwich. He nods. I smile, tell him I like his shirt and that hopefully the weather will change tomorrow. He smiles back and says, "Yes, ma'am. Goodbye." Fast and easy. All requirements met.

Third refusal from a man who at first sight appears to fulfill a number of the conditions: torn pants, dirty hands, sitting on the steps of a building. I ask if he wants a sandwich and he barks, "Do I look like I need one?" I realize the man is actually overweight and probably sitting on the steps of his own house after a day's work. Time to stop. I eat the last sandwich and open up the pack of Camels.

1:30 P.M. End of the assignment.



That same evening I have dinner with Paul Auster. I inform him that I have put an end to the *Gotham Handbook*. Maybe I am still wearing that contrived smile during the evening, because at one point Paul leans over to me, speaking softly as if at a patient's bedside: "It's over, Sophie. ... It's over. You can stop smiling now."

Results of the operation:

125 smiles given for 72 received

22 sandwiches accepted for 10 offered

8 packs of cigarettes smoked for 10 offered

154 minutes of conversation

L R C
KIDDERMINSTER
COLLEGE

THE RULES OF THE GAME

In his novel *Leviathan*, Paul Auster thanks me for having authorized him to mingle fact with fiction. And indeed, on pages 60 to 67 of his book, he uses a number of episodes from my life to create a fictive character named Maria. Intrigued by this double, I decided to turn Paul Auster's novel into a game and to make my own particular mixture of reality and fiction.

Sophie Calle Double Game

I

The life of Maria and how it influenced the life of Sophie

In *Leviathan*, Maria puts herself through the same rituals as I did. But Paul Auster has slipped some rules of his own inventing into his portrait of Maria. In order to bring Maria and myself closer together, I decided to go by the book.

II

The life of Sophie and how it influenced the life of Maria

The rituals that Auster "borrowed" from me to shape Maria are: *The Wardrobe*, *The Striptease*, *To Follow...*, *Suite véritienne*, *The Detection*, *The Hotel*, *The Address Book*, and *The Birthday Ceremony*. *Leviathan* gives me the opportunity to present these artistic projects that inspired the author and which Maria and I now share.

III

One of the many ways of mingling fact with fiction, or how to try to become a character out of a novel

Since, in *Leviathan*, Auster has taken me as a subject, I imagined swapping roles and taking him as the author of my actions. I asked him to invent a fictive character which I would attempt to resemble. Instead, Auster preferred to send me his "Personal Instructions for SC on How to Improve Life in New York City (Because she asked...)" I followed his directives. This project is entitled *Gotham Handbook*.