

HERBERT GOLD

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## The Norwegian Captain

### I

One of the ephemeral predators who ruled Haiti, a colonel self-promoted to general, also a self-credentialed philosopher in his tailored white uniform with glorious philosopher epaulets, medals, and braid, commented from the height of the mountain of murders over which he presided: “Haiti is a land where life is more terrible than death.” The distinctions others felt about life and death left Colonel-General-Philosopher-Coup-Leader Cedras with a stoic indifference, although he seemed to enjoy his own scuba diving and dominion over eight million souls.

Foreigners, it seemed, had the luxury of taking life and death seriously. The man at the ironwork balcony might have looked like a handsome sea-stained old Viking—white fringe of beard, stalwart hairy nose and ears—but the Norwegian captain was a mere annoyance as far as my buddy Whitley, the art dealer, was concerned. Just stationing himself at the Pension Croft in Jacmel, just taking his morning coffee and bread in the lobby, spending the day looking down toward the market or out toward the Caribbean Sea from the balcony of his room, just doing nothing at all, day after day after day—not even seizing the chance to pick up some Haitian art at a good price from Whitley—the Norwegian captain was a total violation of the proper order of things. The old bore displayed too much cartilage and too much gloom.

Why come to Haiti, Whitley asked, unless you buy a Haitian primitive painting or two? Why lurk about this dysparadise with no fun in your heart, no spending of money on genuine folk art which could almost be guaranteed to increase in value?

He tried to remedy the situation. The Norwegian captain resisted the remedy. For Whitley, there developed a distressing condition of pissed-off impasse as he showed various canvases and promised they could be packed and wrapped for easy han-

dling on the captain's eventual flight back to Oslo. "Look, flowers and mountains . . . look, stand back a step, the characteristic flat perspective, the spirit of this island, but also a certain ebullience—"

"Ebullience?" asked the captain.

"*Joie de vivre*," said Whitley, wondering if this was a concept that existed in Norway.

"Thank you so much, but why?" the captain asked. He stood with the cautious dignity of a man guarding against old-age confusion, that combination of deafness, slowed reflexes, the world distorted by sore back and worried brain. "What would I do with such a painting?"

"Show it to your friends."

"Who?"

"Put it on your wall."

"Where?"

Whitley was losing patience. "You must live someplace. You must have friends. What about cousins? Or maybe a . . ." And he used an odd word for a son or daughter: "A descendant? You've got some of those?"

"Who?" asked the captain. "Where?"

I guessed that he was a man who spent much of his time on the sea, and was home long enough to have children but perhaps did not, and expected an old age with a wife who would wait patiently for history to fulfill itself, giving them each other forever. And when it didn't work out that way, he traveled to Haiti, along with others whom history had deceived. And when even Port-au-Prince wasn't far enough from home, he found his way around the island to the village of Jacmel, where ships used to load coffee and sisal, but now the harbor had filled with silt and ships stopped only to let the naked stevedores wade out to offload rice or canned milk and sometimes a narcotics trafficker or a lost soul in search of a redeeming Strange. To be alone in faraway ports was an old habit for the Norwegian captain.

He stood watching us from the narrow ironwork balcony of the Pension Croft as we hoisted a bag with sandwiches and water into the jeep.

History had brought Whitley to the island for different reasons. It was the place where he could work out his dreams and evade the expectations of his parents and nanny. A kid from

Princeton (family trusts well past their peak, capital eroded), a marginal *littérateur* but a first-rate tennis player, he very wisely settled on a niche life in tropical Haiti. There was year-round good tennis and no stooping or chasing for balls. There were dollar-a-day ball boys. The available sex before the time of AIDS was an additional plus. He developed an expertise in the emerging culture of primitive art. He got in on the ground floor. With his good Princeton manners, plus the kind of ear filter which prevented registering complaints about his behavior, he got away with buying Haitian art cheaply, touting the artists he had picked, writing little articles in alumni and art magazines, then unloading his inventory on collectors. He wanly emulated in the art trade the techniques of stock-promoting forebears to whom he was indebted for his trust fund.

When he couldn't sell a painting, he could sometimes give it to a museum—especially local and college museums stimulated by his authoritative articles on folk art—at tax valuations set by the art-dealing equivalent of his tennis service in the back court. He was an expert with pat faults and shifty evaluations.

During a period of spousal support stress, a tragic fire consumed most of his personal collection. Some of the lost paintings were lively, funny, touching, lovely, no matter how exaggerated their valuations for insurance purposes. My unkind suspicions about the fire convinced me that he didn't even much care for the art about which he was an expert. It was just something to do.

Perhaps I have already revealed that I wasn't fond of him. When we played tennis, he could never manage to serve from behind the base line.

Once I asked Whitley about accepting the loan of a jeep and a driver from Papa Doc, President-for-Life Dr. François Duvalier, and then writing a magazine article about the brutal dictatorship in which he declared that Dr. Duvalier was at last giving voice to the poor of Haiti who had always been oppressed by the mulatto elite.

“Is that a *critical*, Herb?”

“Oh no, nothing like that.”

He paused to gather his thoughts. “It's time for the black shits to get something from the brown shits.”

I never summoned up enough rudeness to question his multifaceted art dealing: buying, promoting, selling, donating, insuring, and burning. If I did, he would call all my tennis drives

out instead of only the ones close to the base line. "Like to place a little bet, make things a little more interesting in this heat?" he gently inquired in the soft monotone he used for understated, well-bred persuasion.

We bet five gourdes, which at that time in the late sixties was fixed at a dollar. For me, it was worth five gourdes to see how the bet affected his serve. With a dollar at stake, he served with *both* feet over the base line. He probably could have beaten me anyway, but for Whitley, winning wasn't enough; playing the game according to the rules of others was a violation of his personal code. He needed to show me, the world, and the ghosts of his history who was boss. He also liked taking the five gourdes; a person can always find something to do with them. This baby was a winner.

Only in Haiti would Whitley and I have been tennis partners, even something like buddies. We were two *blancs* on an isolated island, sharing an interest in tennis, primitive art, and the tragicomedy of Haitian history. Under the circumstances it seemed like a lot to have in common even though we had little in common.

Today my friend Whitley was more than usually exasperated. He had given the benefit of his expert counsel to the stupid captain and the stupid captain had still said no. He just stood there. He looked at Whitley, impenetrable. He seemed not to understand anything Whitley explained about investment in artistic genius and future resale value. Whitley hated it when a person persisted in his own irrelevant distractions while Whitley was giving him the lowdown on indigenous culture.

"Perhaps after I think about this," said the captain.

"Personally, I don't think you will," said Whitley.

Some people have no aesthetic judgment, nor do they want any help. Not young anymore, Whitley retained the urgent, rosy, youthful glow of a person who needs to get his own way and occasionally doesn't, but at least he could feel good about not abasing himself. He didn't have to pretend anymore. He could abandon himself to his natural pleasure in disliking someone who didn't come up to his standards.

He seemed to have reservations about me, too, and I couldn't blame him. He asked: "Maybe I'm wasting my time being your friend?"

I didn't answer.

"You're saying you're not my friend, Herb?"

"I didn't say anything."

He gazed at me with mild, almost amorous satisfaction. "At last the lad speaks. That's what you're telling me, am I right?" He grinned and stared, his lips slightly parted as if he were out of breath. "And I can hear your footsteps trotting away, very clearly, trot-trot, trot-trot, although you think you're still standing right here. Isn't that what a true artist does? Or a true critic of art who devotes his life to it? Hear or paint what hasn't happened yet?"

Maybe the spirit of decency was prowling around Whitley, making it difficult for him to be what he was; or if not decency, at least tenderness, a vibration of hurt and need which expressed itself as hurt, need, and anger. Once, meeting him for tennis, I came to his gallery and found him touching a sculpture by André Dimanche—a crucifix with Agoué, the god of water, soldered across it—caressing Agoué lightly with his fingers. He muttered, "Caught," with an embarrassed little laugh, as if he knew what I was thinking: He must really care for it! He does!

"This one I might not sell," he said. "It belongs in my permanent collection, *semi*-permanent, because I might not live forever, pal."

"I'm sure you will."

"Haha. How about the one who loses a bet on that pays for the rum punches at the funeral of the other? And maybe the horse doovers, too."

Hors d'oeuvres. He was still embarrassed, hiding behind his Princeton boy kidding. He didn't like to be considered soft-hearted, although there wasn't much danger of it. Instead, I was wondering if he regretted the temptations of an insurance fire. He may have had a sneaking affection for me, as he did for the sculptor, André Dimanche. He'd mind if I went out in flames; there was no reason to insure my survival. But as to the Norwegian captain—that boy could just go fuck himself and his walls in Oslo which were probably decorated with sailing prints, maps, and a compass.

## II

It happened that Whitley and I were visiting the village of Jacmel, across the peninsula to the south of Port-au-Prince, at the same time. With land communication as poor as it was, people

used to say it was easier to get from Jacmel to Paris by ship than from Jacmel to Port-au-Prince by road. Known for its grace and elegance, its isolation, a provincial sweetness, Jacmel occasionally—not often—enjoyed the convenience of electricity. A few jeeps or all-terrain vehicles bounced through the streets scattering donkeys, children, and Mesdames Saras, market women, their burdens on their heads. For more than fifty years, Préfète Dufaut was painting his dream images of the town—mountain, sea, winding paths, wooden gingerbread houses with vines curling toward jeweled towers. The coffee trade has vanished, but art miners still come to visit and carry away ironwork crosses, fish, and images of Damballah, the great snake god, or lamps, chandeliers, and toys made of milk cans, or paintings by Préfète Dufaut and all the little Dufautlings who imitate the master (Dufaut was imitating himself these days, too).

It didn't matter what Whitley thought of me and I thought of him. We were two white Americans in this faraway village, and therefore we looked to each other something like colleagues. I had rented a jeep for a climb into the countryside to visit the shrine of Ci-va-Dieu, the pool and waterfall which was a voodoo Lourdes, a holy place of prayer, healing and reconciliation. Whitley asked to go with me; how could I not take him? We were sitting in the open vehicle outside the Pension Croft when the warm-hearted proprietor, everybody's auntie, came running out into the sun, something she normally avoided, not wanting to darken her coffee-colored skin. One of her ancestors was a Frenchwoman, Caroline Levy, whose straight hair grew almost to her ankles. Madame had proved this to me with a faded photograph but then said it was easy for her grandmother to grow her hair so long—"elle était petite petite petite, et si mignonne, regardez, Monsieur."

Now an important matter had brought her out into the morning sun. "That European, the *blanc* in the front room," she said.

"I already know him," Whitley said.

The *blanc* was standing at the little iron balcony, staring out toward the sea—a thin old man, once tall, now less tall, with his fringe of yellowish beard and a visored woolen cap of a sort which made no sense in this climate, the dark wool drawing heat into

the head. He looked over and past us, not asking any notice from his two fellow *blancs* in the jeep. Madame said: "He is waiting for nothing. He has been here a month now, that's all he does. He waits and stands there—*ça m'agace*. Please, you have room in your jeep, take him with you." And she leaned forward to whisper: "His wife died. He came to Haiti to try to forget."

People did this, folks used Haiti in this way, alcoholics, addicts, victims, criminals on the lam, people who were suffering and wanted to escape to a place that made no connection with anything they had known before. After his wife died, the Norwegian captain came to stand on a balcony in Jacmel.

Whitley looked at me, incredulous, as I jumped out of the jeep. I called up toward the balcony, "Sir? May I come upstairs?"

The door was ajar, but he seemed to have forgotten I was on my way. He was still standing at the cast-iron railing with its eroded and salt-rusted fretwork. He was gazing past the harbor toward the open sea, beyond where I had stood when I called to him. Perhaps the door was open only to draw the breeze, not to invite me in. "Sir?" I said.

There were photographs in frames stationed about the room and an unframed photograph lying on the bed. His wife had been a plump, round-cheeked, elderly woman, not a Viking princess. I stepped into the room and found myself looking at the photograph next to the pillow with the solicitous indifference of someone pretending to admire baby pictures. "Sir," I said, "you might like to visit this place. They think it's magic. There are ceremonies, they bathe and invoke the gods."

Slowly he turned the bony face with its straggle of beard toward me. He was aware, but it was as if he were moving underwater, not swimming but turning in the tug of tide.

"It's called *Ci-va-Dieu*," I said.

"Here comes God," he answered.

"You speak Creole?"

"Some words are very like French. *Dieu va ici. Ci-va-Dieu*. But it means there goes God or here comes God?"

He followed me down the narrow stairway which led into the ground floor reception area where breakfast would be served if one took breakfast, where street musicians played in the evening if Madame invited them in to play. Whitley sat in the jeep,

expressing impatience by not taking comfort in the shade while he waited for me. He was wearing a floppy tropical travel hat to protect his heavily freckled face.

The Norwegian captain said, "Thank you very much, sir. Yes, thank you."

When he climbed into the back, Whitley seemed to decide he only spoke Norwegian. Whitley asked, "Who's paying for this jeep?"

"I am, don't worry, you're not," I said. I had rented it for the day.

"Well, he should pay his share anyway."

I was thinking of the prices I had paid for things, thinking of my own loss, which had brought me to Haiti this time, a divorce, a debit which was drastic for me but so much less than the Norwegian captain's loss.

"He's out there just when we're going someplace interesting. What a co'*ink'y*dink."

"*Coinkydink*. Was that a Nassau Street word in your time?"

"My second wife liked to say that. No girls at Princeton when I was there—how the devil can anybody learn anything these days? We were only crazed on weekends, I suppose now they're crazed all the time. Figures, doesn't it?"

I felt startled and sunstruck by this irritable rambling about suspicious coincidence, origin and pronunciation of a word or cute babytalk for a word, the passing of the tradition of all-male colleges, the many marriages of my buddy Whitley. He had been at Princeton when only gentlemen could be found there. Now here he was having to deal with an island of non-gentlemen and an imperfectly civilized individual from his own country. He pulled at the soft brim of his sun hat, tugging it down around his forehead and ears. I decided not to point out that it resembled an oversized yarmulke, and having made my decision, then heard myself cheerfully remarking to him: "Israelis wear a hat looks just like that."

The moment of falling in love sometimes strikes like an accident of tropical storm—her hand brushes mine in passing and then falls away and then swiftly returns. Similarly, the moment when spite changed to something like pity for Whitley came when he complained, insisting, "Then he must pay for his

share of the jeep!" Though the cost was mine, Whitley felt personally aggrieved. He had given up on the captain. He wanted me to himself during this outing when he hoped to overcome my unhidden dislike of him and perhaps his of me. Maybe he only wanted an ally in the business of art promotion, not a friend, but nevertheless he seemed pinched and bereft. He too was sensitive to loss.

Between Whitley and me there was the bond of travelers, on edge, wide-awake, a little lonely. Dr. Duvalier, the crazed *Président-à-Vie*, had lent him a jeep and now I did, too, but my loan wasn't free and clear. He had to share it with that dreary Norwegian who had made really bad choices in life, wearing a stupid black woolen cap, refusing to invest in terrific works of art, and loving a wife who died. "Hey, change your mind maybe?" Whitley called over his shoulder, but the captain didn't seem to hear him.

The noise of rattling vehicle and rushing wind drowned our conversation as we bounced on a dried-mud road, grinding in low gear up a steep slope past little clusters of *caille-pailles*, the peasant mud and straw huts. Naked children, bellies forward, chased us, screaming with laughter. Droning of wind, high-pitched laughter, shrieks of it; and the Norwegian captain silent on the metal seat in the back of the jeep. Madame from the Pension Croft had given us a bag of crab sandwiches and bottles of water; I worried about what crabmeat and mayonnaise would find to do in this heat.

### III

Often in Haiti, history and accidents just seem to occur, growing out of volcanic hillsides like the rocks which suddenly come to birth one morning, glinting in the sunlight after the slow churning of night. It's not magic; it just happens again and again. A cooperative work rite, the *coumbite*, labors to clear the land with a crew of diggers and haulers, an admiral to blow a whistle or pipe the bamboo tube, a general to beat the drum. Work is better done with music; the musicians solemnly perform their part of the task. The last time I visited Ci-va-Dieu, years ago, there had been a *coumbite* on the slope nearby; there was one now, too,

gathering the rocks for a fence and making room on a hillside for corn to grow. “They sing,” said the Norwegian captain. Whitley scowled under his floppy hat, his mood compounded of heat, sweat, and annoyance with our guest’s banality.

Suddenly the air changed, freshened. I pulled the jeep to the side of the path and we continued on by foot toward the waterfall with its sweet shedding of coolness from high in the hills at Cap Rouge, or from coursing down the stream of La Gosseline, or from the Étang—I’m not sure of the geology here. Folks were bathing, there was the chime of song, the pleasant chirping and laughing of children, their smiles intensified by freshness, the blessing of water, especially this sanctified water. A lovely young girl, droplets purling on her skin, gleaming, stood in a pool, holding her newborn child and crooning to him. I thought it was some sort of blessing but then heard the words: “Fais dodo, Kola mon petit frère, fais dodo, tu auras du gâteau.” *Sleep my child, little brother Kola, go to sleep, and later you’ll eat cake.* Not a blessing but a children’s song; a blessing anyway.

“She’s not singing in Creole,” Whitley said. It was a complaint, as if he were somehow foiled. “It’s pidgin French. It’s old French. Where’d she learn those words?”

“In another life,” I suggested, “or maybe from her mother or her mother’s mother.”

“Or the radio,” Whitley said. “Transistors all over the map.”

The Norwegian captain turned his face from Whitley to me, and then back to the girl singing naked in the pool. After a while we headed back single file on a narrow path of rocks and trampled mud. A little crowd had gathered around the jeep, poking it with their hands as if they were testing an animal. “Bonjour blancs! bonjour blancs!” They stared and smiled and scrambled off the path as I navigated the slope to get the jeep facing the way out. They shouted advice, urging me backward and forward, and then stood laughing and waving and enjoying our departure as they had enjoyed our visit.

“I like this merry place,” the captain suddenly said in his English that seemed to be learned from an old children’s book. “As a ghost, it’s so bright, I am happy to haunt this place.”

Whitley looked amazed. “Hey, that’s the picture,” he said. “I could ask one of my artists to paint that scene. You could be Agoué. Your *hat*. Would you like to commission such a painting?”

The captain looked up. He wasn’t sure he understood.

“The god of the sea,” I said. “Agoué is Neptune, maybe, or Moses, or St. Christopher—something like that.”

“Those are not the same thing at all,” said the captain severely. He squinted at me in the sunlight, seeing a man whose gods were in a jumble. Then he took to staring at a little compound of *caille-pailles*, cooking fires burning with the smells of cane and charcoal, voices gathered in the shade of palm trees. The children howled with joy at the jeep thrusting and jumping with its disheveled passengers, dusty and foolish, one wearing a floppy Abercrombie yarmulke. “*Bonjour blancs! Bonjour blancs!*”

As we bounced down the road, really just a rutted dried-mud path, Whitley took pleasure in chatting with me in a way that firmly excluded the Norwegian captain. Our passenger sat gazing out at the palms, the scrub and vines, the *caille-pailles*, and the people who stood by, calling out, “Blanc, blanc.” “The important thing used to be finding emotion in painting. Modern art leaves that out. It doesn’t even tell the story anymore, so consumers buy whatever they think . . .” A child stepped in front of us and I had to brake suddenly as the naked girl with her distended belly put her hand out, saying, “Fi-cens, blanc, gee mee fi-cens.” Whitley went on as soon as we were back in gear: “Poor people hang cheap kitsch, rich people buy expensive kitsch or pretend they *really* want high art at the level they can afford. They hire experts. They don’t know what they like, but they know what’s good.” He snorted with his joke. “*Outsider* art—so what’s the opposite? Insider art? But I’ll tell you, dear colleague, there’s something honest in naïve—folk—primitive—what the fuck, it’s *real*, so what shall we call it?”

The captain was staring into the scrub as if he wanted it made clear that he wasn’t eavesdropping on us. Reddish dust glistened in his reddish-white beard.

“—and I’m lucky enough to do pretty well professionally, besides. How many can say that?” Whitley smiled thinly, the dust smearing his lips, changing to a smear of mud as he licked and spat into a cloth. “As well as I can.” More smile; wiping of mouth. “Better all the time.”

“Do you care for Haitian painting?” I called into the wind, turning my head toward the captain.

“I believe so,” he said, and I didn’t ask what question he thought he was answering. Then we were all three, even Whitley, distracted by a large black junk bird hopping from low bush to

low bush with a part of its wing and a piece of a leg chewed off by some predator. No one said anything until the jeep was safely past and the captain said, "A cat, I think."

"More likely a rat," said Whitley.

There was a gloom in Whitley that made me want to unlock him, an utterly forlorn meanness, which rapidly alternated with his bursts of salesmanship, his waves of manic enthusiasm for the pitch. The captain's darkness was filled with ghosts. It was grief unrelenting. It wanted to take total possession of him; it spilled into the corners of his mouth and the reddened eyelids; but he sat there vigilant, a hero against himself. I watched him study his hand as he lifted and held it in the air, pretending to shield himself against the sun, looking for the tremor of loss of control. In the gesture I could imagine his patient lovemaking over the years with the sweet round-cheeked lady in the photographs in his room at the Pension Croft.

It was impossible to imagine Whitley losing himself, crying out in a moment of joining soul and body with another's. The captain, at the edge of very old age, was both a passionate man and burnt out, those qualities joined in him. Whitley, greedy, tirelessly needy, was a person I thought I knew and still a mystery to me.

Back at the Croft, the captain's scalp under the coppery white hair gleamed with sunburn, his skin weathered and reddened afresh. He climbed down from the jeep and stood alongside, trying to figure out why Whitley was angry. He gave up. He said to us both, "The best day, the very best. Thank you very much."

Then he entered the hotel and Whitley said, "At least you should have asked him for his share of the gas."

"I told you," I said.

"And I told *you*."

"Okay, okay, I need a nap. Too much sun."

"I didn't have my nap this afternoon and I'm older than you are."

"Are you collecting errors these days, along with art?" I asked, and finally he shut up. He was handing out reproaches free of charge, a steady barrage of them, but in this heat, at the end of a long day, no one could expect perfect affability.

The next morning, very early, on my way to the market, I watched a procession of children, girls in matching red and blue jumper dresses, heading to school for some sort of ceremony.

The red and blue were patriotic colors, standing for the unity of Haiti. (According to legend, the Haitian flag had been created by tearing the white out of a red, white, and blue banner; the national logic defined the mulatto as red and the black as blue.) It was barely dawn; streaks of pink and white in the sky. Things start early so that things can close down at noon when the blasting midday furnace takes over. Again I heard that chattering and laughter which makes some North Americans and Europeans envy the Haitian talent for pleasure despite the long disaster of Haitian history. Pleasure seemed especially stubborn in Jacmel.

I was looking for presents for my children at the beachside market—a dress sewn from many-colored scraps for my daughter, with lace around the collar and decorative buttons in improbable places, in crooked rows down the sleeves; a wooden bird carved from driftwood for a son; a painting of chickens eating corn for another son. I thought of buying something for my wife, my soon-to-be ex-wife, but I wasn't sure she would think it appropriate. I was thinking of other early mornings with her, when everything we did together was appropriate.

Then I went back for breakfast at the Croft, a glass of *shadek*, grapefruit juice, and the strong dark-roasted Haitian coffee with canned condensed milk, and the coarse white bread with its fresh, raw, sour taste which I loved. I flung my packages down and sat at the little bar in the hall.

The bread was in a platter on the counter, cut in thick chunks, but before I could reach for it, Madame la Patronne asked, "What shall we do?"

I followed her upstairs. The Norwegian captain's door was ajar. A man in a red neckerchief, red shoes, maybe dressed for his daughter's school celebration, was standing fastidiously a few steps from the bed. His red bandanna was also the emblem of voodoo priests and *tonton macoutes*. The official was the District Something, sheriff, *chef de section*, probably also the coroner. The captain's mouth was open against the pillow and the pillow was wet around it.

"Translate, please," said the man with the red bandanna. I wondered why the captain wrote to his wife in English, not Norwegian, on the scrap of paper: *I loved you, I loved you*. And that was all he wrote. It may not have been a farewell letter; it may only have been a conversation interrupted by death.

The photographs of his wife were wrapped in copies of *Le*

*Nouvelliste*, the oldest newspaper in Haiti, which still looked as if it were printed on handset type. I doubt that the captain had been sick. He had tied the package of photographs with rough hemp twine from the marketplace down the street. There was an Oslo address on the package and a small bundle of currency, dollars and gourdes, slipped under the knotted cord. By the time I turned back after looking around the room to see that he had packed his clothes, the money was gone. The official was writing something on the back of a child's school tablet. He met my eyes with bland, peaceful, bureaucratic complacency, daring me to ask where the money went. In Jacmel, among strangers, in the time of Papa Doc, I was not going to ask this question.

"If you permit, Monsieur," I said, "I could mail these photographs to Norway from Miami when I leave."

"Monsieur le Notaire," he said, correcting me about the matter of his office and proper title. It wasn't a direct answer. I felt a little nervous about proposing to carry away the package without his express permission.

There was a heavy smell of bodies in that room, some living, some not; dust, sweat, and the accumulating heat of the morning. Whitley had come up silently behind me, hearing the disturbance one floor down from his room. He was rakishly barefooted, Princeton boy investigating events down the hall in his dorm.

"Personally, my private opinion," he said, "all we did was upset his routines—accomplished nothing. Tried to do something for a person and you see? You see what happens?"

"What happens?"

Whitley bent fastidiously toward the bed—not afraid to get too close—and then peeked up at me, hoping to move my education along. "I showed him a zombie, it was really beautiful work—Gourgue, one of my best painters, moonlight in the cemetery, the peasant leading the zombie by a rope—not expensive for a fabulous piece. Problem was, he was a zombie himself."

*"What happens?"*

In a close and crowded room, the captain lying there in his silence, Whitley saw that he had my attention. "What happens was we wasted our time. We should have known. A person doesn't love life, he isn't going to love this fantastic folk art."