

And the more I learn, the more I believe that I should be murdered before I am allowed to step behind the curtain and into the ballot box. My X is too important. If the wrong people were to know where I planned to place my X, it would be curtains for me. One X and thousands are gunned down. The same X placed in another box means they starve to death. One X and the banks are preserved for another four years down there in sunny Argentina. One X and Robert will face a stiffer penalty. X marks the spot.

I used to look forward to Robert's arrival. Now I simply wait. Anxiously. He's late.

I didn't always wait. People used to wait for me. People used to listen to me and give thought to what I thought. People waited for me and I used to be able to look myself in the eye there in the mirror here in my Hollywood home. I used to look and there was a light, and there was a reason and the light that had taken me to these heights, to this success, this good fortune, burned brightly—albeit naively—within the bright white walls of my Spanish-motif home here in the heart of this heartless city, this city of angels, this town called Los Angeles.

But people don't wait any longer. I gave in. I allowed myself to be seduced and people stopped waiting for me and now I wait for Robert, reliable Robert, to make his rounds, administering his anesthetic to the likes of people like me who dare not look into those eyes that used to burn, who dare not look into mirrors.

The telephone rings and startles me. I plunge to get the receiver, moving quickly to stop the jagged assault of a cheap, piercing clatter. Oh, AT&T, why did I ever forsake thee? I hope it's Robert. I hope it's not Robert. I want to hear that he's coming, that everything's going to be okay. But a telephone call would mean that something was wrong: He

wasn't coming, he didn't get the drugs, or maybe he was going to be very late due to some strange occurrence in the labyrinth of events that can only exist in the ethereal and exotic and not far away world of the narcotic business.

"Hello?"

"Hi there."

It's not Robert. It's Amy. Fuck me. It's Amy. Of all the things I have been waiting for and I finally get it, I finally get a call from Amy, I get Amy with a casual, "Hi there."

"Well, hi."

"How have you been?"

How have I been? After three months and after all that, Amy asks how I have been. How have I been for Christ's sake? I have been a wreck. But why is she calling now?

"Not bad. How about you?"

"I've missed you."

Missed me? Missed me? I wonder if she could possibly have any idea how much I've missed her. It doesn't even make sense. There's Amy, soon to be cruising through menopause and I can't take my mind off her. I should be chasing a tartlet or something. Something young and ripe and visible proof of my virility. My masculinity. But I am caught in an irrational love for someone I can never see.

"I've missed you too, Amy."

"I had a dream about you last night."

Ah, so that's why she's calling. She had a wet dream last night. She's in heat.

"Oh?"

"Yes. I really would like to see you."

Oh? Did we leave our husband after all?

"What about Bo-Bo?"

"He's going to Knoxville tomorrow afternoon."

Ah, so we're back to that. Bo-Bo the sleazebag husband who has these strange, nonsensical trips to cities that make no sense. No one even knew Knoxville had a World's Fair. It was one of the best kept secrets in America. Who goes to Knoxville? Who would leave Amy?

"He's coming back Sunday."

"That's a long trip for him. Six days. Did you pack his toothbrush?"

"Aren't we funny? No, Larry packs his own toothbrush. I just iron his shirts, wash his underwear and socks, take him to the airport, talk to his mother when she calls, and pick him up at the airport. He has to go on to Miami after Knoxville."

"I've been to Miami once. Nice town. Pleasant. People are nice."

"So when am I going to see you?"

Ah yes, the wet dream. I used to dream. I used to dream of people like Amy.

"How about tomorrow night?"

"Great! I can't wait to see you."

She can't wait to see me? But she seems to have done a good job of waiting to call me.

"Do you want to come by or do you want me to go up there?"

"Why don't I come by?"

We sign off and I nurture the telephone receiver back into its advanced Japanese technological cradle. This had not been an atypical conversation with Amy. She had done an innocent but masterful dodge of confronting the issues, feelings. Christ. I'll have to be sure that Robert will stop by tomorrow afternoon. That's if he ever turns up today.