



THE HEART HAS ITS
REASONS

CHARLES COIRO

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* The heart has its reasons which reason ignores - *Blaise Pascal*

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Part 1

1

Jordon Marsh was part of a family that consisted of his father, Jonah, his mother Rona and his sister Nora. Nora was three years older than Jordon and was his big sister when he got involved with any of his classmates in fights or arguments. In the same way, she was the intermediary whenever their mother criticized Jordon for his dirty shirt, his torn trousers or his scuffed shoes. “He’s a young boy and his playmates are always kicking, punching or shoving each other; it’s what small boys do to try to achieve dominance. You might as well blame Nature. It is a way of life that can’t be changed.”

Nora and her mother were always at odds with each other and as is often the way, both were trying to exert their feminine dominance over each other. Mercifully, Jonah, the father would bury himself in his newspapers to escape the daily bickering between his wife and his daughter. When Nora turned 17, her mother was forever asking her why she didn’t go out with boys. Nora had been seeing a young man but things changed when the young man came to the house to pick up Nora. He was admitted to the house and the normal introductions were made. No sooner did they sit down when Rona asked innocently, “Did you go to the University? Did you graduate with good marks; where are you working now; are the salaries good, and finally, how much do they pay you each week?”

No young boy on a date is prepared for such a grilling and Nora was told that “if you wish to continue seeing me, she would have to meet him someplace rather than picking her up at her home. This is just a date to get to know each other, your mother is too inquisitive and I feel uncomfortable.”

Thereafter, when Nora made a date, she asked her date to meet her at the local ice cream parlor or wherever. It was not too different with Nora’s girlfriends. Her mother Rona would greet the girl and then ask, “Don’t you have some nice boys you can introduce to Nora? Hardly anybody comes to take her out.” Red faced and annoyed, she even denied her girlfriends admittance to her house so she appeared to her mother as the daughter without any friends. “How was she going to get married and have a family if she doesn’t see anybody Rona thought.”

Nora was a bright girl but not overly ambitious. She had been given lessons playing the piano and while she was quite good, she did not have the talent to be anything more than performer in a large orchestra. Her father Jonah was no music critic but he offered to have her continue her lessons. Nora, while enjoying the instrument was unwilling to put in the 6 or 7 daily hours of practice. When it came time to choose a course of study, she selected literature with an emphasis on writing. It was the one thing she could do without engaging other people. Nora was not averse to being with people but she felt that most of the time was spent in discussions that to her were meaningless. Who cared about what so and so thought or did. In a way, she said, it was like the graffiti left by travelers to say, "I was here or I am here", perhaps even a little like the "Kilroy Was Here" drawing that the WW2 soldiers posted on every wall, monument or surface and like Facebook where people burp their single sentiments into a void more vast than the Universe. It made no difference what some small voice said; it mattered not at all. Nothing seemed to move Nora in an exciting way and she accepted it as "the way I am". She was a rather attractive looking female but her attitude and disinterestedness left her with few choices as far as men went. Her relations with men were also lukewarm. When she did agree to have sex, she felt that her partner only took and never gave and as a result, she went through the motions without really giving or being moved or excited. Even this she did not mind except for the admonitions that were directed at her by her mother to find a man and get married. It was there that she rebelled. "What right has my mother to criticize or try to guide me after her own life was nothing more than mediocre. I suppose I love both my parents in their own way but I am me and I must have a chance and make a choice and not be interfered with or advised by what others think. If it takes me a few years or even if it takes many years, I want it to be my way and I will suffer the consequences and not put the blame on anyone else. And, as far as men are concerned, it goes the same. I am not going to marry if I feel the man wants his way and does not give my feelings any consideration.

As a budding author, Nora was no great shakes. She would start to write but some internal block prevented her from developing her characters and so they remained as meaningless entities in the make believe world of the novel. She passed her courses with a passing "C" average and none of her professors ever really engaged her by telling her she had a great potential as a writer. She slipped through the floor boards, so to say the same as so many students do so that she could fill the void in the working world as best as she could. None of her professors ever tried to encourage her to study for a Masters degree and she herself had had enough of writing essays and short stories.

So, upon reaching her legal age of 18, she induced her father to give her spending money and to pay for the small apartment she wanted to rent. “Papa”, she said, “I love Mama but she will drive me crazy with her wanting to control my welfare and my life. I need to be able to make my own decisions and to conduct myself in a way that both of you will feel proud. I know she means well, but my friends are not used to this type of questioning. There is no use asking you to stop her questions as you know very well, when she doesn’t want to listen, not even Gabriel’s trumpet can keep her from her grilling my friends.

2

Both Leah and Jordon had lived together, first at college and then, when they both graduated they saw no reason for not continuing. Jordon had studied for his Master’s in Structural Engineering and Leah studied for her Masters in English Literature, and in particular, the American novel. Their habits were normal; they generally ate out twice a week to cut the boredom of eating at home, tolerated sex when the need arose but in general, led a life that was agreeable to both. After all, they were like any ordinary couple knowing that all their needs were fulfilled and if not in the pulp magazine fashion at least satisfying enough to not cause frustrations. They shared all the duties such as cooking, cleaning and paying all the bills. Their individual laundry was given to the Chinese laundry so there were no tasks or chores that they did not share. This had been their agreement and when Jordon said OK, they formed a union. There was one thing though that Leah insisted on; was that Jordon should not expect Leah to have any children. She had determined at a younger age that she was not going to be an incubator; let the other women keep the population rising which in her critical discussions with women who stated that they would feel incomplete if they did not have children” Besides,” she said to whomever she was talking to, “Don’t you read anything but the gossip magazines. We were 2 ½ billion people in 1950. Can you guess what is predicted for 2050? And that is only 36 years from now and most of us will still be alive; 9 ½ billion; that’s about 7 billion more than today. And you talk about not feeling complete. When your children are starving and thirsty, I want to hear how complete you feel. That’s the trouble with the world, everybody thinks of just himself and wants to do whatever they feel like doing. And no politician has the cojones to face up to the facts. He or she is too interested in getting their share of the “good deal” that politicians are offered on a silver tray.”

Leah was still intact before they knew each other and Jordon had one episode that was incestuous with his older sister under somewhat unusual and unplanned circumstances. It

had happened when he had just enrolled at the University. His sister Nora who was three years his senior had just broken off with a young man she had been seeing, Nora had rented a small apartment to give her a sense of independence and a chance to be away from the influence of her family especially her mother.

On the cited occasion, Nora had asked Jordon if he would help her paint her new apartment and so one mid morning he threw some old sneakers, a pair of old trousers and an old shirt into a plastic bag thinking that when he was finished painting, he would just throw the clothes away. The two started painting, both on small ladders with Nora painting the ceiling. They broke for lunch which Nora ordered; a large pizza and then continued until about 5:30 PM when they collapsed on a small sofa. Nora had said that she just wanted to keep a couple of candles for light and to relax with a small flask of Brandy Alexander. Nora was in great pain and could hardly walk since she was on her the arches of her feet on the ladder as she painted the ceiling. Jordon offered to massage her feet and her calves. It was not an unusual thing to either offer or accept. As he massaged her feet, he experienced a strange sensation of doing something taboo. It was a pleasurable sensation and his interest was piqued when he started massaging the calves of her legs. The skin texture was soft and as she was on her stomach, her skirt showed a bit of her thighs. The effects of the martinis did not help his feeling slightly excited. He drove the thoughts out of his mind as best he could, but the feeling in his scrotum was tense, never the less. With the windows opened on the pleasant September evening, a small refreshing breeze was driving the paint odors out of the room. Nora had a small radio plugged in and tuned to a program of romantic “oldies” like Tommy Dorsey, Harry James, and Glen Miller. These songs were mostly for dancing the fox trot and not the wild dancing of the present. It was dancing where you held your partner close and could feel the body under the clothes. After listening while, Nora said, “Come, let’s dance this number, I haven’t danced to this music in ages. You do dance the fox trot don’t you?”

“I thought your legs were hurting you?”

“No, they feel so much better after your massage. Come on, dance with me.”

Jordon was feeling no pain with the cocktails since he usually drank a chocolate milk when he wanted a drink. Besides, the drink had kept him with a slightly pleasant ache in his gonads and he didn’t want his sister to know he was feeling horny.

However she insisted. As soon as they started dancing, he felt himself too close and each dance step brought a slight press against her. He arched his hips away from her so as to

avoid any contact, until Nora asked, “Why are you bending in such a funny way? Dance standing straight.” He got through that dance and was relieved to sit down while he went to the sofa bending as though he was fixing his socks. He took a big swallow from his glass and thought, “Whew, that was close.”

They sat together in the candlelit semi darkness each wrapped in his own dreams, while the darkening sky made the candles brighter and the surrounding room almost alive. Then, as they listened to the music, Nora suddenly remarked, “I love this piece, come let’s dance this number.”

“I can’t and I would rather just sit and listen.”

“But it’s one of my favorites, come on, dance this number with me.”

“Nora”, Jordon said, “I would love to dance this number with you, but to be truthful, I don’t want to offend you.”

“Offend me”, she returned, “How are you offending me?”

“Well, I might just as well tell you, it’s that when I am dancing with you and am close to you, I respond to you in ways that I know I shouldn’t. I am sure you can feel me when we make a turn or a change a step; Nora it’s not something I can simply control. The trouble is that it feels so beautiful and while I try not to be close, I love what it feels like. It just happens and I feel ashamed of not being able to control my emotions and more afraid of what you must think.”

Nora was silent for a moment and said, “Jordon, I am not offended and yes, I can feel your excitement. It feels good to me too; I am not made of stone. So now that we have that little problem settled, dance with me before the music stops.”

“Do you mean you want to dance with me even after what I just told you?”

“Yes, we will both try to just concentrate of music.”

Taking another big swallow of the Brandy Alexander, Jordon felt that “at least she knows that I am not doing it on purpose but from now on, I won’t try to hide.”

As they danced, Jordon could not stop himself from asking, “If dancing close feels good to you too, can you dance closer to me so that I can really believe you?” With that, Nora pressed against him and lowered her head against his chest. They danced slowly, hardly moving their feet but with a steady pulse that was agonizingly clear. When Jordon wrapped

his arm around her, she moved warmly in his arms. Jordon, without thinking, kissed her forehead and her cheek.

“That was sweet” she said as she hugged him with her two arms around his neck. As the music ended, Jordon, now flushed with excitement and the drink made him throw caution to the winds. Nora”, he said, with his voice husky from the liquor and his passion, “Would it be alright to kiss you,? May I?”

Nora in answer turned her face to his and said, “Yes, I would like that very much.”

They stopped dancing and only swayed in rhythm to the music and the music that was their own. They swayed crushed against each other and finally, Jordon, with an almost pleading voice said, “Nora, I want to touch you so badly.”

Again, Nora acquiesced but said, “But only from the outside. “ Of course that admonition by this time had no significance. Touching only on the outside made the desires to touch flesh even more desired and soon Jordon was touching her where once he could not even have imagined. In his overwhelming passion, he suddenly kissed her breasts, her stomach, her thighs and finally her vagina following her guidance as to what to do. She said, “You know, we cannot go all the way?”

“Yes, I know but those small warnings only led to” just led to “just rub me against where it feels good to you. Rub me against the opening, just that.”

A short time later, he timidly asked if she would just put the head in just a little bit, a little bit, no more.” Giving in to those wishes made the next step easier when he asked “Let me put myself inside you just once so I know what it feels like.”

Jordon awakened Nora three times during the night and then slept soundly. In the morning, when the two were having coffee, Nora said, “What happened last night was very beautiful and will always be very precious to me, but it can never happen again. You know that don’t you? It will be our little secret that will never be shared by anyone else.”

When in later years Nora and Jordon were with their families, a small, almost Mona Lisa like smile would appear on Nora’s face in acknowledgement of that beautiful and sweet and never to be repeated interlude. Nora worried at first whether they were committing a punishable crime but in her research on the subject she found out that consensual incest was not a crime in Belgium, The Lower counties, Portugal, Spain, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, Turkey the Ivory Coast, Brazil and Argentina. At least, she thought, relations between family do take place. Not that it was excusable but at least she was not as deviant as she

thought. Jordon's relations with Leah; often times when the desire was not there, he would fantasize that he was with Nora. It lightened the burden somehow and heightened his excitement.

Both Jordon and Leah led an uneventful life; putting in their day at work and returning to their apartment to have dinner which both helped prepare and then, after cleaning up, both retired to busy themselves on their individual computers. At about 10:00 PM, they listened to the news and went to bed by 11:00 PM. The routine was agreeable, non-changing and acceptable to both. On rare occasions, they visited Jordon's mother and father. The silences were painful and Jordon could see that the getting together bought them all farther apart than closer together.. Perhaps, he thought, we can get together with my sister Nora. After all, while Nora was older by a few years, she at least lived in the same years with the same influences, etc. No dice, Leah would often bring a book with her and say she had to do some research for her job but it was obvious that the book was a novel and that Leah only wanted to put in the time until it was time to leave. Then she miraculously came alive and her goodbyes were as bright as a new penny. No one, including Jordon was fooled by her lack of interest and her boredom with being with Jordon's family.

One weekend, Jordon was to be left alone at home since the weekend was the birthday celebration of Leah's mother. They were to go to a primitive campsite and rough it for the weekend. Jordon begged off in a sense that was retaliatory for Leah's embarrassing performance when they went to visit his family and also to be alone for a short time.

On that particular Saturday, a registered letter was received by Jordon in which the contents indicated that Jordon was the legatee to a huge sum of money left to him by an uncle he had never met who had moved some 35 years ago to Argentina where he made his fortune in real estate. Much of the legacy was in the form of real estate and consisted of buildings and huge tracts of undeveloped land and cattle. His uncle, who was called Paulo had never married and so Jordon was the closest in his immediate family to carry the name, Marsh.

Jordon immediately called his father to ask about Uncle Paulo and to tell him of the registered letter he had just received from a lawyer in Buenos Aires in Argentina.

"I know nothing of this uncle although I do remember you mentioning something about a brother and wondering if he was being affected when Juan Peron died and the government was then being headed by his wife, Eva Peron, but that was so many years ago."

"Yes", his father resumed, "You may know that my brother Paulo and I never saw eye to eye on anything and when we separated; we never communicated. You say the letter

indicated that the legacy was very large. Did they say how much? I suppose you will have to go to Buenos Aires and get the thing settled. Will Leah be going with you?"

"Leah is visiting her parents and won't be back until tomorrow night so she doesn't even know about the letter. Well, if you can think of anything about your brother, let me know because I will be completely in the dark."

"And what about your job? Will they give you a leave of absence? Sometimes these legal matters can take a long time."

"I will talk to my boss on Monday. It is an awkward time really, we are just in the middle of a huge contract and as you know, the contract was handed to me to develop and fulfill."

"Well, let's keep in touch. You know your mother and I can always look in at the apartment to see that everything is alright."

"If only Leah was here, we could be able to discuss the matter logically. Leah was always one to be able to look at a problem and come up with a logical solution. Jordon tried every 15 minutes to reach Leah's parents but they had been planning a fishing trip and Leah had either not wanted to make an intrusion on their fishing trip or they were out of range of a signal. Finally, in frustration, Jordon decided to look up some facts about Argentina so that he had at least an idea of the country. The letter was written from Buenos Aires and so he concentrated on that city. Also, he wondered how much their trip would cost, about where to stay and about what the weather would be like at that time of the year. Should he write a letter to his firm to formally request a leave of absence or would it be more friendly to speak in person. He knew he was well liked and that the firm was happy with his work or else, why would they have given him such an important contract to handle?"

Then, "how would Leah react to the news. She was a bit reluctant to change her habits and what would they say at her job if she had to stay away for any length of time?" She was sometimes difficult to predict even though they had been together for six years. For both of them, the habits they developed in their living style was agreeable and they had settled into a comfortable style of living. Sometimes very boring but also reassuring in that they did have to break their accustomed way of living by doing things that were socially necessary to maintain friends.

At last Sunday night came and with it the return of Leah from her visit to her parents. When Leah had settled down, they both sat drinking some hot cocoa as was their habit.

Finally, Jordon said, “While you were away, I received some very important news that could have a bearing on our lives.”

“What could be so important that it would change our lives, she asked?” Leah did not really express any sudden interest. Jordon was inclined to daydream sometime and make more of an issue about something that took place and that in reality was nothing at all. But she asked, “What is this important news?”

Instead of trying to explain, Jordon gave her the letter he had received and watched Leah’s face as she read. He noticed that her forehead had wrinkled in concern and he could see she was thinking before she would answer.

“What do you plan to do? The letter mentions no amount or anything except that Paulo Marsh left you some real estate, some property and some cattle.”

“ Do you plan to acknowledge the letter?”

“We have no choice, who knows how much money is involved; the letter only asserts that buildings, property and cattle could amount to several million dollars.”

“I thought we had agreed when we first got together that money was not the important thing for our lives but rather the satisfaction we got out of doing our work and for achieving our goals on our own. I’m sorry Jordon, but for me, the money is unimportant. For me, the way we have patterned our lives and our careers and the personal successes we have achieved is how I want to live.”

“Then you won’t join me and travel to Argentina to find out about the legacy, Aren’t you at least curious?”

An exasperated Leah then asked, “What about your job and the career you have been developing with major projects to work on and responsibilities that are developing you as a whole person? I thought that was what we were working toward. I chose to be with you and to stay with you because I thought we had those ideals which unearned money or wealth could never replace. Were those just the words of sophomore students who made pretense, and that they themselves were important because all the rest was just conjecture? I never wanted to marry because that was the socially accepted way of living together. I chose to live with you because I thought we complimented each other; that we had visions and that we were not deceitful or dishonest to ourselves. You disappoint me Jordon. And what will you find in Argentina? Corruption is rampant. Everything is for power and using any way possible to achieve it. Do you think your sainted Eva Peron was anything but just a pawn so that the

political party could use the Peron name and consequently the power. Yes, people called her a saint because she delivered a few paper sacks of food ,which she distributed? And the “poor”, they will do anything to get the best of a situation. They are out to screw the powers of the government and those who administer the laws. Just like in Roman times; give the poor games and bread and they will behave. Today we give the poor food stamps and public programs to keep them quiet. When do you plan to leave and long do you plan to stay?”

“I will leave as soon as I can discuss the situation with my boss and as to how long I plan to stay, I have no way of knowing until I get there. Will you wait for me here or what do you plan to do?”

“In all honesty, Jordon, I can’t give you an answer right now. We are both free; you going to Argentina and me staying at my job. We never promised or vowed that we would remain together; just that it suited our thinking at that time. And now, that you have decided to change what we dreamed, I cannot answer in honesty what I will do since my thinking is the same as before but is now in conflict with your thinking. Money has no value when you don’t need it.”

“But how can you change everything just because I want to find out what it is I am receiving or deciding to accept it or decide to give up?”

Leah finally said, “Jordon, I am very tired after my trip and I can’t talk about this anymore. I hope you will excuse me because I really want to go to bed.”

The following Monday night, Jordon told Leah that he was going to his parents house to discuss the matter with them and to see if he could find out a little more about Uncle Paulo. Jordon arrived, his face flushed with excitement showed the letter to his mother and father. There was a tension of excitement in the air and finally his mother asked. “What does Leah say to all this. I imagine she must be very excited. Why didn’t she come with you today?”

“I’m afraid that Leah is not very interested. She thinks I should ignore the letter and that we should just continue our lives, making our own plans.”

Hearing this, his mother erupted like a volcano. She had had enough of Leah and her strange ways. “So”, she said, “Leah isn’t interested. Here my son is heir to possibly millions of dollars and Leah isn’t interested. What kind of woman is she, anyway; Jordon shares all the work, he shares the cleaning; he cooks his own meals and he has his clothes cleaned at the Chinese laundry and to top it all off, she doesn’t want to have Jordon’s children.”

Jordon's father tried to calm her tirade against Leah but Rona said, "No, I won't keep still, let me get it all out of my system, I've been meaning to for a long time."

To Jordon she said, "Don't you want to carry your father's name? Don't you want to give us grand-children? Does Leah feel that she will be losing her figure? Not to offend you Son, but Leah is no Barbie Doll. She was lucky you even looked at her. Take my advice, she will stop you from progressing all she can. She doesn't act like a wife. She doesn't cook for you, she doesn't clean your house, what does she do? With your money, you can take your pick of women that do things for their husbands and enjoy doing them too. Bring your personal things and leave them here in your old room, Papa will help you and you can attend to your future as you wish." Turning to her husband Jonah she asked, "You will help him won't you Jonah?" "Of course" replied Jonah, "It shouldn't take more than a couple of hours if you organize your things and put them in boxes. Then when you have time you can do what you want with them."

Jordon did not speak nor go to the defense of Leah. Too often, he thought the same things but finding and courting a girl had too many unknowns and he was not willing to spend the time defending her.

It was true, both Leah and he ate their big meal for lunch in a restaurant, at night they had a fruit and some yogurt. Breakfast was always a coffee and a donut bought outside and eaten at work. Then they went out twice a week for dinner. Once a week, Jordon went to his parent's house for dinner. Leah always excused herself from attending saying that it was his family and that they were only interested in seeing him and besides, she disliked Jewish cooking "It feels like a lead weight and I can never sleep after her dinner. Not even for the Seder dinner was Leah interested in joining the family. "I'm not Jewish so it is meaningless for me. Normally on Saturday they would order a Pizza or some Kentucky Fried Chicken which would serve for the follow night.

"Another thing", said Jonah, "I have a friend who is an accountant. He might be able to give you some tips on how to avoid some capital gains taxes. These lawyers and accountants know all sorts of ways of getting around things. Another thing, make sure that all the documents are translated into English so that you can discuss them with a lawyer, here In New York."

"I really wish I could go with someone just for the morale, but I don't want to have to spend airfare, hotel and food plus the lawyers daily fee especially since I know so little about

what is involved. Perhaps later, when we know what is involved, I will just have to do that but right now, it all comes out of one pocket.”

Then Jordon’s mother said, “Why don’t you take Nora with you? She’s not working at the moment and I know she is bored being here with us since she had to give up her apartment.”

“No”, said Nora, “Jordon needs someone who can advise him and help in the decisions. I would only be a bump on a log if I were with him. Besides I still like to practice the piano, even if it is for my own pleasure.”

Her mother returned, “But Jordon is not looking for an advisor, he himself says he needs someone to keep up his morale and who better than his sister can do that?”

Nora persisted, “it would mean renting two rooms at the hotel, plus meals.”

“Nonsense”, her mother replied, “you can both share the same room with double beds. He is your brother after all.”

Then turning to Jordon she said, “wouldn’t you feel less alone if you can discuss the day’s happenings with Nora?”

Jordon and Nora looked at each other for a quick second and Jordon said, “Sure I would like to have Nora with me but she may have other things she wants to do.”

“No, I would like to go if you want me to. It will be nice visiting a foreign country. I can’t remember when I last had a vacation.”

The plane landed in Buenos Aires in late afternoon. After going through customs, it was 5:00 PM when they finally reached their room. Both were hungry after refusing the bag of pretzels and soft drinks that were offered as food and decided to find a good Argentine restaurant to sample what they read to be the finest grilled meats. The steak, with a small salad and a bottle of wine hit the spot and so they returned to the hotel, to bathe and rest before the next days meetings.

It was only 9:00 PM when they went to their respective beds to sleep in the cool night air.

At about 3:00 AM, Nora whispered, “Are you asleep?, I hear you twisting and turning.

“No”, returned Jordon, “I can’t sleep.”

“Why can’t you sleep?”

After a moment, Jordon replied, “I can’t help it but I am remembering when we were together. Why aren’t you sleeping?”

Another pause and Nora answered, “I was remembering the same thing.”

Jordon was laying face up on his bed with his arm extended in the space between the two beds. His thoughts were aflame as he sensed his sister only 3 feet away.

Just as he was about to turn over on his stomach to try to quell the fire that was burning in his sex, he felt Nora’s hand reach out to touch his. To Jordon, it was a dream of paradise. A combustible silence reigned and then he heard Nora ask:

“Do you want to come over for a short while?”

Part 2

1

Buenos Aires (good air), perhaps it should be considered as a fresh, new breath and maybe even a fresh beginning for both Nora and Jordon. Those first weeks were the most savage. Accustoming themselves to the weather, the language, the dress and most of course, most of all to the details of the legacy. The amount was astounding to both Jordon and Nora: some 134 million dollars at the current exchange rates and the property values at present.

First, they discovered that Uncle Paulo had renounced his American Citizenship quite a number of years ago and that the money and property were not under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Tax code. That is, unless the recipient receiving this legacy would have to pay taxes as

Capital Gains. His lawyer continued, “Would you consider forfeiting your citizenship for 134 million dollars? Of course, there is a period of time after forfeiting your U.S. citizenship that where you would still be liable for the taxes but after that period, you would be home free of U.S. taxes. With Argentina, you could probably hire a good attorney who could guide you and exploit the loopholes so that your taxes in Argentina would be bearable. In the meantime, the businesses, remaining under your Uncle’s name would continue paying you enough interest so that you could live very decently. In that way, your capital gains taxes could be minimal if you live in an ordinary, non-extravagant life style.”

“How long would it take to obtain Argentine citizenship, asked Jordon.”

“You would have to learn the language, i.e. you would have to learn Spanish. Along with that, some history of Argentina and some geography and how the country is governed. All that you could do while you are waiting for your time that you will be required to make you free from U.S. taxes. I suggest you find a tax consultant here in Buenos Aires and one in the U.S. so that they could collaborate and find you the best solution for both countries. It will probably be a little costly but then, we are talking about a great deal of money.”

The following week, both Jordon and Nora with a translator in attendance went to visit the buildings (some old and some under construction) and to be introduced to the people who were in charge of the real estate and/or under construction. Most of the department heads were bi-lingual and so that eased the conversations and in the construction divisions, Jordon was accepted as their boss who knew the business. Jordon did not want to interfere in the daily workings of the buildings under construction but he wanted weekly reports on progress and costs. They had been reporting to his Uncle Paulo before so there was no difficulty there.

After he and Nora had had a chance to see the new construction, they were introduced to realtors who were in the rental or sales of buildings. With this too, Jordon kept the staffs working as before and again, he required that weekly reports be given so that he could follow what was happening. In the business of the real estate and construction, Jordon felt fairly secure. He would be able to direct the business with his own English speaking personnel.

In the matter of the cattle however, both had a great deal to learn. After hiring a small 4-passenger airplane to fly them to the ranch, they had a good chance to see the topographical profiles of much of the country. They were truly impressed. First was that Uncle Paulo had become a traditionalist in the raising of beef in that his cattle were all grass fed. Most of the vast numbers of steers were no longer being fed on pampas grass. Many of the cattle raisers used the feedlot method to fatten their steers faster than to rely on the grasslands. They

discovered that they could turn grassland over to crops such as corn, soybean and soy meal and make greater profit by selling to China. The turnover for domestic crops could take place in a matter of months while it took 4 to 6 years to fatten up on grass. The result was the famous, delicious Argentine beef was no longer the world's greatest beef as once purported. Consequently, Uncle Paulo reduced his numbers of cattle and invested in Aberdeen Angus, Hereford and Charolais breeds instead of the steers that developed from the old Spanish breeds that grew wild. The improved breeds were given no hormones nor were they given other injections. Uncle Paulo planted organic soy, sorghum and sunflower to recharge the depleted soil so that the fields could then revert to the natural grasses. Hence, the open pampas was not being depleted but was in a rotational state to rejuvenate the land. They used no fertilizers or did they resort to insecticides so the land and the grasses so the lands remained pristine as they were in the past. The results were the famous Argentine beef on which the country prospered.

“Well”, said Jordon, “that accounts for the land being with cattle and huge parcels without cattle. I think we shall have to discuss the cattle part of the legacy before making a commitment. On the one hand, the amount of the legacy makes it unnecessary to look for profit simply because all business is based on it. I believe that we must take a stand on how to give back instead of simply taking from nature, but, as I said, we shall have to think and learn more about that aspect. I know too little to make a decision at any time soon. Turning to Nora he asked, “Wouldn't you like to spend some time out here learning what the life of the gaucho is like, I know I would. I don't want to be a taker, I want to be a giver. There are too many people in the world who just want to take and destroy as long as it gives them a profit.”

“I am happy to hear you say that Jordon,. Life here on then pampas is not easy but even from this short visit, I can feel a kinship with the way of life of the gaucho. What the gaucho takes as natural, I see as this great rollback to times when one could recognize the earth and the world. I found no peaceful feelings in Buenos Aires , not as I feel out here.”

The people who were managing the operation were set up in an Estancia. It was the same family from whom Uncle Paulo had bought the land and the cattle. Uncle Paulo was sensitive to the old ways of the Pampas and wanted to preserve some vestige of the old along with the new. The head of the ranch or the principal director along with his two sons managed the group of gauchos; many of which were born on the Estancia. There, at roundup time, the cattle were branded, the young bulls neutered and the festivities of rodeo and great, typical feasts were prepared. There was dancing and singing and the party like festivities

lasted long into the mornings. It was a good time since the major work had been finished; the gauchos received their pay and the permitting of some drinking capped the party.

Don Fernando Santana was the elderly manager and with his two sons and their families, the ranch continued in its original way. Upon meeting Jordon and Nora, there appeared to be a rapport between the sons and their wives. Both sons and their wives were fluent in English and had been educated at the University in Buenos Aires and knowledgeable in literature and music. When Don Fernando first met them, his older son translated from Spanish to English. He relayed his father's wishes that the two take some time to look at the land and the cattle and suggested that "perhaps los Americanos would like to live out for a few days just like the gauchos. He, don Fernando would be honored to join them, even though he was an old man in his 80's. Don Fernando had originally lived and worked as a gaucho when his father was the owner and he remember with tears in his eyes of the boyhood he had outgrown and the memories of his youth. After his first wife Graciela died, he remarried at an age in his early fifties and had two sons with his second wife Adela. Leonardo who they called Leo and Francisco who they called Paco. Both sons were born at the Estancia and were in reality the managers of the ranch.

Jordon and Nora were thrilled to participate. Jordon had not seen his sister so animated ever and it was as if she was transfused with excitement and joy. Her whole personality seemed to have brightened and she spoke optimistically about Argentina.

The two son's wives, Ana and Iride were open and friendly and when it was discovered that Nora played the piano, they were ecstatic. Iride played the violin and Ana the cello. Both sisters loved classical music to the point of which they had frequent discussions or almost arguments as to who was the greatest composer Mozart or Bach. Knowing that Nora had studied some 8 years, they both sought her opinion as to Mozart and Bach. Nora would be the weight that would tip the scale.

"How do I do this diplomatically without creating a conflict in an argument that they obviously had for many years. Maybe I should just tell them that I prefer Beethoven. No, that wouldn't do, I will have to use my best diplomacy of which I have very little.

After clamoring for her opinion, Nora finally said, "It's not so much who was the greatest composer but from where did they compose. Mozart was phenomenal, his work was full of invention, with a brilliance possibly never to happen again and his is a music of the heart. With Bach, however, his music transcends the minds and hearts of us humans and comes from that which we only know of as the soul. Both complete Man in his deepest and

most meaningful way. Only the two, combined make up the complete range of music for Man.”

Thinking that Nora’s opinion as to who was the greatest composer would reinforce either of the two women’s choices they asked, “Which is your favorite composer.”

Nora answered realizing that perhaps the best solution was to simply say “Beethoven.”

But the change that had taken place with Nora’s attitude was what surprised Jordon most. Even he had never seen this enthusiastic embracing of life before. In a moment of enthusiasm, he heard Nora exclaim, “I wish I could live on this ranch, it is so peaceful and real. When don Fernando noticed how wonderfully well the women were together, he asked, “Srta. Marsh, why don’t you stay and make your home here on the Estancia, after all, it is really your home since you are the owners. In the back of his mind, he felt that an educated woman was what was needed here on the Estancia. His daughters had too little contact with the outside world since the ranch was large and as a consequence isolated. They did have fiestas every so often but Don Fernando would have liked there to be some outside influences rather than just Argentine.

After they had their supper, don Fernando sat with Jordon and Nora in front of a roaring fire in the large stone fireplace of the estancia. He spoke through one of his daughters-in-law and told them of how wonderful it was that their Uncle Paulo had kept up the tradition of the ranch as well as his insistence upon raising beef in the traditional Argentine way of keeping the cattle fed on pampas grass instead of going the way of most ranchers who used the feedlot method. He said it would be his dearest wish if the two of them sampled what it is like to live the life of a gaucho for a few nights. The gauchos, he said are a great part of our traditions and it would be my honor to introduce you to their simple way of life.

Jordon and Nora looked at each other and Nora spoke up.” I would love to be able to participate in the traditions, wouldn’t you Jordon? Please say yes.”

“Do you think we have time?”

“Yes,” Nora said, “That’s the trouble with life today, we always think that we have no time. We pass up things that have meaning for things that have no meaning whatsoever. You especially need time to look and feel about things that may become part of your life.”

Upon seeing and hearing Nora’s enthusiasm, Jordon didn’t need too much convincing so he said, “OK, we would love to have the experience.”

Don Fernando then spoke to his Foreman and told them to get everything ready. Don Fernando, his wife, his two sons and their wives along with the foreman and two gauchos would make the outing. “Do you both know how to ride a horse,” he asked. “But don’t worry, we will find you some nice gentle Criollo horses. Their ancestors were the horses that escaped from the Spanish conquistadores when they came to the Americas. They are the horses the gauchos ride today and they are very intelligent, not like the purebred horses which were interbred too much.”

“But what will we wear, my clothes are city clothes?”

Don Fernando responded with “My daughters will give you the right clothes and I will outfit Don Jordon with clothes he will be comfortable in. I hope that you don’t mind sleeping under the stars for a night or two. Too bad It is not October for that is the beginning of our Fiesta de la Tradicion. But never the less, we will start the fiesta a little early so that we may show you our beloved traditions. We shall have to go to bed early tonight since we start at 5:00 AM tomorrow.”

Up at dawn, breakfast of corn grits with bacon and yerba mate. (Mate is the tea made from the leaves of the Yerba tree and is consumed at any and all times when other countries would drink tea or coffee.) Dressed in their gaucho clothes, the group left the Estancia. Along with Don Fernando was his wife Dona Leyla, his two daughters and their husbands, the Estancia Foreman, two Gauchos and Jordon and Nora. For the occasion, Don Fernando said that to ensure the comfort of the women, they would also bring the chuck wagon provisioned with some basics such as flour, bacon, oils and some pots and pans. Also, Don Fernando said that the women should be given an extra poncho each so that the ground did not feel so hard when they went to sleep, for they would be sleeping under the stars.

The group left slowly, led by the Foreman and the two gauchos. “We will start off slowly so that you can feel a little more comfortable on your horses. At that early hour, the pampas grass was still wet with the morning dew and the sun flashed on the grass as it waved in the morning breeze. There Was a sweetness coming from the pampas grass as it dried in the morning breeze and a short time later, Nora exclaimed, “Look,” the sun is just starting to lift the darkness of the night. A crimson slit of light appeared over the grass as though the grass itself was lifting the night away to allow the sun to shine through. Even at the first touch of sunlight, Nora felt a warm sensation on her cheeks as though the sun was announcing its mighty power when it would reign during the day. Insects rose from the grass where they were disturbed by the horse’s hooves and small birds were active having their morning meal of insects. All was in perfect harmony and responding to nature’s routine of life and death. It

was only 11:00 AM but the sun had mastered the air and the temperatures started rising. The fragrance of the grass was different now and it gave off a mellow, toasty pungence. Even the birds had hidden away after their morning repast and stayed in the cooling spaces near the roots.

It was time for their lunch break. The chuck wagon was placed so that the longest part faced the east and afforded a small amount of shade. The horses were unsaddled, given water and tethered to pegs in the ground so that they could graze unrestricted. Ponchos were placed on small poles to give additional shade while the mate pots and their straws were passed around to quench the thirsty throats. Some small pieces of Cotija cheese made from cow's milk were served on a wooden plank while the Gauchos made the fire that would be the heat for the asado, or the roasted beef. Meanwhile, a small calf was caught, butchered and its opened carcass was salted and spread eagled on a framework of branches. This was then set in front of the fire to cook slowly while the group rested and refreshed themselves for their noontime meal. Don Fernando had his normal siesta while the other rested or chatted. Only the Gauchos and the Foreman kept busy with gathering wood for the asado and changing the position of some of the ponchos where the sun had invaded the shade.

"I have never tasted such beef in my life," enthused Jordon. "What is it that you do to make it so juicy and delicious."

Don Fernando, who had awakened from his siesta proudly said, "We do nothing except add some salt to the meat before we roast it. It is the beef that is grass fed that makes the difference", he said proudly. "That is the reason your Uncle Paulo kept the ranch operating in its traditional way. For us, it is a way of preserving our tradition by offering the best beef in the world. Today, the ranch owners are only interested in making as much profit as they can. Sure, it costs more doing things in the traditional way, but profit is not everything. There is also the pride we feel when we can offer our beef and know it is the best available in the world and it is produced in Argentina."

The stopover for lunch had taken 3 hours. Mostly it was to get away from the hottest time of the day and also to rest and refresh the horses. Breaking camp was fast with only the ponchos folded, the remaining meat stored in crockery jars and the fire thoroughly extinguished. They would ride for another 4 hours before making camp for the night. No ponchos needed for the sun now but used to wrap oneself against the start of the cool night do come. A large fire was built and for supper, and a stew called Carbonada had been prepared, Carbonada was a stew made in a great earthenware pot that consisted of some of the beef from lunch, sweet potatoes, corn on the cob broken into short pieces and served with freshly

made tortillas, a flat pancake like bread which was served nearly with every meal and of course, the Yerba mate tea. After supper, the two Gauchos and the Foreman performed the Chocarera and Mabamba dances with their intricate footwork and using their Boleadores, (a series of cords with weights attached used to tangle a steers feet) while following the rhythms of a Bomba drum. The festivities lasted until 9:00 PM while the Gauchos cleared a circle of the grass to keep a fire burning during the night. Everyone snuggled in his poncho and prepared for the next days journey while the clean air of the Pampas blew gently over them and made all memories of the fierce hot sun of the noon just that, a memory. It was natural as one could imagine; the renewing of the day; the continuance of life, the new birth and the death to keep nature in balance. There was no mystery only a concordance with life.

The morning came too quickly. It seemed that they had just gone to bed when one of the Gauchos awakened each person with “Buenos Dias and a jar of mate tea. Splashing cold water on your face and a quick rub on a towel restored your sense of being awake and a ravenous appetite.

Sitting around the fire (it was still pretty chilly without the sun) Don Fernando said that they would be heading back to the ranch. Don Fernando’s wife Leyla and Nora would be making the trip back in the chuck wagon since they were sore from yesterday’s ride and were not used to being on a horse for so many hours. The only one was Jordon who secretly wished he would have been included to join the two women. His backside was as sore as he had ever remembered and his legs hurt from clamping onto the horse as they rode. Ana and Iride were quite used to riding and rode almost every day so there was no problem there. As the group headed back home, the silence fell away as the first glimpse of the sun rising in the East made them all see the wonders of the new day and the beginning of the awakening of life in all the forms living in the Pampas.

Nora, especially was overwhelmed by the immensity of the sky. She had only been able to see the small portion of the sky that was not framed by the tall buildings. “I never realized how vast the sky is seeing it from horizon to horizon, it makes everything else so small in comparison. Look”, she said to Jordon, “that’s Venus the morning star. It is telling us that the sun will soon be turning the early dawn into day. I don’t know how to express myself, but I feel that I am part of the world and not just some unhappy creature that happens to be alive. Don’t you feel different? Don’t you feel that you are part of this whole process of life?”

Again, Jordon had never seen his sister so animated, It was like he was seeing a whole new person. He wished he could feel what she was feeling but his mind and his thoughts were filled with the enormity of his responsibility of having to guide his newly inherited properties.

And without Leah, he felt the entire load of responsibility. Sure, Nora was with him but she seemed to be involved with the poetry of the new sights and sounds she was experiencing.

When they finally reached the Estancia, it was late noon. Everyone wanted to just bathe and rest on the verandah until supper. It felt so good to be out of the saddle. Watching a horse being ridden was one thing but sitting in that saddle for hours was quite another. “How nice,” Nora thought, “to just come home and have everything taken care of by someone else. I think I could get used to living that way without any problem.”

But Jordon was anxious to be going back to Buenos Aires. He had to find people to represent him and with whom he had to have some trust. Anyone could smile, put out their hands in a hearty handshake and then try to take advantage of you while you were still trying to learn about the businesses he inherited. He needed someone that was on his side even though they were not involved in the businesses. His thoughts went immediately to his father and mother. True, they knew less than nothing about his newly inherited businesses but they were on his side and just as a wild animal finds security in its den, so could Jordon with people with whom he could feel were on his side.

Don Fernando tried to encourage him to stay longer. Even Nora said, “We should spend a few more days here, there is so much to learn about this operation.” But Jordon insisted that he would come back after he had a general idea about the whole picture of his businesses.

“Jordon,” Nora finally said, “I would like to spend more time here, Would you mind if I stayed for a while; you will have to be coming here again? Since I am not much of a help to you, you could concentrate more on what you will doing without me.”

Don Fernando and his two daughters-in-law enthusiastically agreed that Nora should stay with them. It was after all, her business and she could get a feel of the country since she appeared to be so happy here. Jordon finally agreed and so that was settled. When he got home, Nora would need some of her clothes and a few other personal things like some of her music. Jordon would send them and while he was sending the articles she needed she asked Jordon to purchase two sets of strings each for the violin and the cello. It would be sort of a surprise gift to Ana and Iríde.

“I shall be very busy trying to contact lawyers and accountants. So maybe mother or father could buy the strings. I wouldn’t even know where to go.”

“Mother could go for the shop is very near our home in New York City. I’ll just write down the address for mother and she will be able to find the store very easily. It’s called the New York Quality Strings and is located on the upper west side of Manhattan. “

It was another reason the girls and Don Fernando were anxious that Nora stay. Ana and Iríde both played instruments; the violin and the cello and this was an important part for them since their friends lived so far away. It would be nice to play trios and also it would help set them as an important part of the cultural life in the rural areas. For Don Fernando, the case was a little different. He knew that the ranch was holding on because of the efforts of Uncle Paulo who was interested in maintaining the traditions instead of simply trying to make the biggest profit at the expense of keeping the traditions alive. Don Fernando was old, he was 79 years of age. He had settled down in his life so that only the real values that he had sifted from all the rest remained. That which remained was living his life the way his father and grandfather before him had lived. Don Fernando felt the old values were essential if the country and the Estancia were to survive. With the enthusiasm of Nora, Don Fernando felt that perhaps Jordon might look favorably towards keeping the ranch operation as it was. In terms of just business, the only way to go would be to fatten the cattle by use of a feedlot and to use the land for cash crops such as soy meal, soy beans and corn. The turnover was months not years and the profits for sale to China were large. Don Fernando did not know what pressure Nora could put on her brother but he observed that when she wanted to do something, Jordon gave in.

The three women were delighted. There was an old Marshall and Wendell piano that had been bought in the 1900’s when the ranch was really successful. It was a Square Piano, sometimes call a Square Grand. It had been used by Don Fernando’s first wife who was reported to have been quite a virtuoso. After she passed away, the piano remained and was tuned just in case a pianist visited to give a concert. Dona Elena, Don Fernando’s first wife was quite a force and an influence as far as the arts were concerned and Don Fernando wished to keep that notion alive. With Nora staying for a while, they had to send to Buenos Aires for a piano tuner since there was no one in any of the close by towns who had the skills.

The women decided that with the piano accompaniment, the Estancia needed to give a concert so that they could proudly say that the Pampas was not devoid of culture. What to play though was the question. They would need time to play together and practice and of course the biggest question was, will Nora be able to stay? They had figured that Christmas would be a safe time to have a big fiesta and to offer the concerts at that time. That would give time to the people to arrange their holidays; time to prepare for a fiesta, get the house in order

and plan on the foods and wines they would need. Everyone was excited and Don Fernando was especially pleased for he saw this as a possible way to keep the ranch operating as it had been. He always said, “Change is inevitable but it is not necessarily always good.”

2

When Jordon returned to New York, he sat his mother and father down and told them that he had something very important to tell them. He then went on to explain that the legacy he received had a value of some 134 million dollars. His father had to sit down for the amount was overwhelmingly higher than he thought. Maybe three or four million but this 134 million was something he could not even imagine.

“Where is Nora, isn’t she with you?” she nervously asked.

“Nora decided to spend some time at the ranch; she seems so different, she is enthusiastic more outgoing and even friendlier. Maybe it’s the weather but you would hardly recognize her. In any case, she made friends with the two wives of the ranch manager’s sons; both women are good musicians and with the inclusion of Nora, they want to create a “cultural climate” in the Pampas.”

Jordon’s mother then exclaimed, “But how could you have left her all alone. I have heard too many things about those Grouchos who are without women. How could you have left her alone?”

“First, the men are Gauchos, not Grouchos. They are men who work driving cattle from field to market or from one grass land to another. And they are managed by a strict foreman. Second, Nora is older than I am and it was she who wanted to stay- like I said, there is something there that makes her happy. I will see her when I go back down to Argentina.

“Now, as I mentioned when I came in, I have something very important to discuss with the two of you. To be open and frank, I need my family with me so that I have a solid base to return to after my try to tackle this very big responsibility I inherited. Having to find people who will be honest without any real knowledge of the ranching and the ownership of real estate, I have to rely a lot on my family, even if it is only moral support and so I am going to ask you and Pop to pull up your stakes here and come down and make your home in Argentina. With the amount of money I inherited, I will buy you a big house and for you Ma, you can have a maid and for Pop, an expensive car and a chauffeur since I know you don’t

drive. I already told you that Nora is crazy about the country and we will have the whole family together; so will you consider my offer?"

"Son" said his father Jonah, "I'm not even going to discuss this with your mother because I know she feels the same way I but, I could never live down in Argentina. I was born in this house, all our friends and relatives are close by, I know this neighborhood and the people who own the stores and shops where I buy and spend time talking. We are too old to make a new start. Who would I talk to? If I went for a walk, where would I go? Is there a good delicatessen there or a good Jewish restaurant where I could enjoy the foods I was brought up on? How would I be able to attend the Temple, I wouldn't know what to talk about with the other members? And for me, How could I not be able to visit the graves of my friends. These things are what my life is all about.

Both Nora and you are not babies anymore . Your both adults and you have to leave the nest at some point in your lives. I am not trying to be mean but you have to now stand up on your own feet. With all the real estate you now own and the cattle ranches, you will have to make the necessary decisions. It is your mother's and my time to rest; we did our job of raising two fine children and just as our fathers' had to let us on our own, we have to let you on your own. You know we love you and only wish the best for you so you must now try your wings."

Jordon was dismayed. He had counted on the moral support of his mother and father. He was silent for a moment but knew basically that his father was right. What right did he have to uproot his father's whole life and friends for his own selfish purposes? Taking his coat and hat from the chair where he had placed them, he made for the door.

"Where are you going" asked his mother with a sound of fright in her voice? "Your father only wants the best for you and so do I, you know we will come to visit you. We are not abandoning you. So where are you going?"

"It's alright Ma":, he said, "I'm just going to buy some things Nora asked me to send her right away. And about the moving to Argentina, I know you are both right about staying where you are both comfortable. I admit that I am a little afraid about the responsibilities but when would it be better to accustom myself than right now?" Saying that, he left to buy the things Nora had asked of him.

Jonah, his father said with an almost sobbing voice, "I would have rather bitten my tongue out than having to say such things to my only son. But, he is now an important man with large businesses to attend to and he needs to do this on his own."

It was rather late afternoon when he finished his purchases for Nora and he found himself nearby to his old apartment. He thought, "I will just see if Leah is home so that I can tell her I am back and to tell her about what happened in Argentina. He still had his own key and when he left, he did not say he was leaving the apartment for good. Luck was with him for just as he was putting the key into the front entrance door, he spied Leah with a large armful of books in her arms.

"Hi," he said in as jovial a voice as he could muster, I just returned from Argentina and I wanted to look you up to see how everything was going. I thought, if you're not busy, we could go out for dinner; after all it's Friday and we always dined out on Friday."

"Hello Jordan, I was just at the library as you can see; here help me carry some of the books; they are very heavy and I should have taken a cab, but you know me, "I can manage" but this time they were a little more than I could carry. Come on upstairs, we can have a cup of cocoa and you can tell me about your trip. Besides, it's too early to dine out."

Jordon, was delighted to meet a friendly Leah. When he last saw her, she had a bitter look and an even more bitter tongue. When they reached the apartment, Leah asked Jordon to heat some milk and to prepare the cocoa while she changed into something more comfortable. As Jordon prepared the cocoa, she returned and waited for him where she sat at the kitchen table.

"And so, how did you find Argentina? What is the climate like? I understand that most people there eat meat at least twice a day, is that true?"

"Well, I was a little overwhelmed at the amount of sky that is visible, especially in the Pampas. I never realized how big the sky is until I was able to see it from horizon to horizon. The people seem friendly and are generally outgoing. They love their traditions which to them is one of their greatest treasures. And, there are a lot of very wealthy people who seem to be living in the traditions of them old days of Castile. A great many of the people are descended by Italians who came in great numbers from northern Italy and who brought with them a great deal of the Italian culture. With such a vast distance between the northern and southern borders, it lies between the 22nd and the 65th Latitudes and has basically 4 types of climate. In the East, the winters are mild and the summers, warm It is pleasant and healthy. In the North, it is very warm with high temperatures and high humidity. The West is dry with long days reaching 10 hours of light. And for the South, it is relatively cool and dry."

“Did you meet many people and how did you communicate?”

“Incredibly most people in business or government speak English as well as Spanish so for me, I was no problem. Even so, I hired someone to act as an interpreter just in case the occasion arose where I would need someone to relay what was being said. But you haven’t even asked me about my legacy? Aren’t you at least curious?”

“Alright”, she said, “What did your Uncle leave you?”

“You are not going to believe this but the total value is 134 million dollars. I myself, still can’t believe it. Leah”, he went on, “I am asking you to please reconsider and come with me. We can do what we want, go where we want; have someone cook and clean for us, buy whatever fancies us and just enjoy life to its fullest. Please reconsider, I really need and want you with me.”

“I can see you have already lost your compass settings. Tell me something Jordon, how many rooms can you live in at the same time? and if you eat dinner, how can you eat more than you can hold in your stomach; how many suits, shirts and ties can you wear at one time and how many cars can you ride in to get to wherever it is you want to get to? Just before you received your letter from Argentina, we both had or have good jobs and your salary was more than you could spend without being wasteful. You ate whatever you wanted to eat and there was no need to clean up for somebody else. We talked about the things that interested us and we went to see a movie or a play or we went to a concert when we wanted to. We shared a nice apartment and it only cost you one half the rent. We divided the costs of utilities so that they were not so terrible. When we went out of town, we rented a car or we took the bus or a train to wherever we were going. You came home untroubled about your work and we enjoyed our time together. Now that you have your many millions of dollars, I can see you already look haggard and worried; you have lost your normal healthy look for one that is troubled and concerned. What I have just described to you goes equally with me. I am content with what I have and do not need more than I have. For me, you were an ideal partner, you didn’t insist that we have children since you know that I have no desire to be a mother. We are both free from duties to the other and so we get along well so there are no hidden resentments against each other. So my question to you is, “What am I gaining having access to your money? I neither want it or the responsibilities it brings. When we first talked about our goals in life, that was what we followed all these years. Weren’t you content with the life we made and shared together? Now you have a large fortune that governs what you do, what you think and the way you act. Think about that for a while. What will you lose against what you will gain. In my mind, you lose everything and gain nothing. Money is only a means to power. Is that

what you are looking for! Power? Power to do what? Power to make you feel above other people or power to do as you please? Well, you already have that power by making the choices you made when we agreed to a way of living. So no, Jordon, I will not go with you and share your millions for things I already have and that I have knowingly chosen to be happy with.

“OK, he said, you needn’t say anymore. Maybe you are right and maybe I am wrong but I believe that I will be able to see some of my convictions come to life and you can’t just wish that conditions will change by daydreaming, but I will use this opportunity for bettering things that need to be made better. Anyway, thank you for telling me your feelings. Sorry if I bothered you, so I’ll just head on home.”

“You see,” said Leah, you have even forgotten that you invited me to have dinner. Shall we do Chinese? And let’s skip talking about Argentina. One of the good things we had together was that we allowed each other to make decisions and to follow them if both agreed and to not get in the way of the other. But, if a decision is not shared, then that means one is a leader and the other is a follower, and that won’t work.”

Jordon left Leah and as it had started to rain and he had only a jacket, he decided to go to a bar and have a brandy Alexander. It was the drink his sister had made for him while he was helping her paint and led to what happened afterwards, something that always made him feel good.

It was early evening, the meal with Leah gave him a feeling of tightness in his jaw and he wondered whether that was a sign of a coronary of which he was unaware. It was a typical bar, low lighting and serviced “regulars”, clientele who needed that last drink before going home. At the old but polished mahogany bar sat a man in his 60’s, dressed in what looked like last season’s fashions. He had before him two whiskey glasses with a beer chaser and he looked neither right nor left. His face was quite puffy and his complexion a ruddy red. When Jordon entered and sat down three seat away from him, the old man turned for a minute and appeared as though he wanted to talk. Jordon was in no mood to listen to someone’s hardships and so when the bar tender asked what he would have, Jordon said, “Bring me two brandy Alexander’s and said, “and bring them to me at my table.” Jordon had selected a small table so as to avoid any well meaning but needful man to listen to his troubles; he had enough of his own. Nearby but unseen by Jordon was a small table placed in a niche so that the table was barely visible. At the table, sitting alone, was a woman of about 26 years of age. She wore a short mini-skirt much too short for a woman of her age, a pearl grey silk blouse with a ruffled collar, high heels that looked to high for her and in general, a pasty type of makeup which was obviously too garish to be in taste. Before her was an empty glass with a green

olive (she had apparently was drinking martinis) and was rolling the olive around the inside of the empty martini glass. In an almost innocent way, she said, "I hate olives so why do they always put them in my martini?" Her remark was not really directed to Jordon, but rather a remark made to no one in particular. Spotting Jordon at the nearby table she asked, "Are you going to be drinking both those drinks?"

Jordon was taken back for a moment and then said, "No, would you like one?"

There was no hesitation on the woman's part and she sidled off her chair while showing a generous amount of thigh. Jordon looked, he had no intention of looking for company but after the rebuffs he received from his father and then Leah, he was feeling a little vindictive about the unfriendliness in the answers he received. Here was someone who appeared to be friendly and a little bit open. He thought, well, at least it will be someone to talk to and who knows what might happen next? Her name was Carla Perez, she was obviously a Latina and very attractive in a loud sort of way. Her very black hair she wore pulled back tightly on her head and her warm toned skin was set off by the black eyes that seemed very large for her face. With a shade of blue green eye shadow and black eyelash makeup she gave the appearance of looking a little loose. Her lips were very full and she magnified them with an overabundant application of a bright red lipstick. She spoke with a Spanish accent and when Jordon had a real chance to look at her, he thought, "Without all that cheap makeup, she is really very pretty. He could not stare at her figure without appearing obvious but she appeared to be quite shapely. The pearl grey shirt with the ruffled collar revealed a cleavage that was more than exciting.

"Thanks for inviting me for a drink, I was just needing one more to pull me through. Pushing one of the glasses towards her she took a sip and said, "This is not a drink, it tastes like a vanilla malted. Ugh she said, How can you drink this stuff ; too sweet for me. Could I have a dry martini instead?"

"Sure", he replied. I am not a drinker so the best I can go along with is a Brandy Alexander." Raising his hand to catch the bartender's attention, he ordered a dry Martini.

"How are you called", she asked using that particular Latin way of speaking.

"My name is Jordon Marsh, and yours?"

"My name is Carla Perez and I come from Venezuela."

"That's interesting because I will soon be moving to Argentina. I hope I can speak Spanish as well as you have learned English."

“What will you be doing in Argentina; do you have a family or work there?”

“No, but I have just inherited some property there and I think I would like to make change. I have never really travelled and I just feel that moving to another country would be an exciting change for my life.”

“Will you be going with your wife and children?”

“No, no, I am single and that is why it would be easy for me to start off fresh. With children, you have to think about their education and their friends. No, going alone is much easier. But tell me, “he asked, “What are you doing in the United States. Do you have a family here?”

“No, my family is still living in Valencia in Venezuela. I came here almost 10 years ago with the hopes that I would be able to have a career here as a dancer, but, that didn’t work out so I am here alone and sometimes it gets very lonely. I sometimes wish I could return but everyone thinks that I made a success here and so it would feel very embarrassing to return as a failure.”

“But you are still young; how can you consider yourself a failure? Can I ask how old you are?”

“I will be 26 in two days. I guess that is why I am feeling so blue. Almost 11 years here and I cannot even go home if I wanted to.” Carla spoke wistfully, her eyes looking off into the empty space seeking the darkest parts of the tavern so that she did not have to face anyone.

“You seem so sad, are you in some sort of trouble? If you like, you can get things off your mind since I am a perfect stranger and what you say to me could never be repeated to anyone you know. Sometimes, it is easier to talk to a stranger than to a friend. A friend will always remember and you will always know that things which you want to remain known only to yourself will not be hidden.”

“Jordon, I cannot burden you with my hard luck stories, but thank you for wanting to listen. It’s true though, it is easier to talk to a stranger than to someone you know. But if you are really interested, I will tell you. Do you think I could have another drink? I see you have also finished your two drinks.”

Jordon waved his hand to the barkeep and made the silent motions for two more drinks, a Martini and an Alexander. When the drinks arrived, Carla took a good sip that drained half her glass.

“Promise me that you will not judge me too harshly because I am not too proud of what I have to tell you. Well, it started when I was still a very young girl of 15 years of age. I had always been very good at dancing and I was considered pretty. My thoughts and my dreams were to become a famous dancer and to make a lot of money. Well, I was dancing at this night club in Caracas; it was my first real paying job and a friend of the nightclub owner introduced me to Jorge- that was his name. After I danced, there was a break until I had to dance again. Meanwhile, the nightclub owner said that Jorge had invited me to his table to have a drink with him. Nobody knew I was only 15 and with the makeup, I looked a lot older. Anyway, Jorge told me that I was a very good dancer and that I was wasting my talent in Caracas. I will be your manager. He said he had connections in New York where he could get me a job at a big salary. I was excited and told my family but my mother was not in agreement that I should go to New York. She said you are too young and they will take advantage of you. I kept at it and the family finally allowed me to go. “Where will you get the money to travel to New York and how will you live?” I told her that my new manager would lend me the money and then I would be able to pay him back when I got my first job.

Jorge asked me for my passport so that he could get my visa and told me to be ready to leave in two weeks. I told him “but I have no clothes, no costumes How will I manage?” He told me not to worry, that he would be taking care of everything. At that time, he became my lover. I wasn’t too happy about that but how could I refuse; he was doing so much for me?

When we finally got to New York, I asked where we were going to live? He told me that we would be staying in a room that belonged to his friend and that he was going to find a place in a good neighborhood. The apartment was one small room with the bathroom out in the hall that you had to share with three other rooms. Everything was old and ugly and dirty. When I complained, Jorge told me that he was looking for something really nice and guess what , he said. “I was able to get you a small job until we can get you something big.” Well, the small job was in New Jersey at a burlesque theatre. When I complained, he told me to be thankful I could get any type of job. “You never told me you were only 15 years old. I could get in a lot of trouble if the authorities found out. In the meantime, you can earn your keep by working where I tell you to work.”

“Things got worse because Jorge thought he could make a lot of money gambling. He started to drink and gamble and things became desperate., One night, he said he owed a lot of money to this friend he gambled with. “You remember he said, his name was Ramon.” I remembered Ramon alright because when we met, he kept staring at my bosom and my hips and looked at me with lust. “Ramon,” said Jorge was pressing him to pay back the money I

lost. When I told him I didn't have the money right then, he asked if I would talk to my woman and make an arrangement to get rid of some of the debt. Jorge pleaded with me to go to Ramon's apartment and said that Ramon had friends in the Spanish Mafia who could take care of me. Jorge said, "Carla, please do this for me. I will always be grateful to you for saving my life or from having my arms broken."

I went to visit Ramon but I was sorry afterward because Ramon was a brute. He did everything he wanted to me as though I was just something you could use. Well, that started everything, whenever Jorge got too much in debt, he made me repay his debt for him. Finally, I told Jorge that I didn't come to the United States to dance in a burlesque or to be a prostitute. I told him that I was going to return to Venezuela so would he please give me my passport. He told me he had to go to his safety deposit box and that he would be going to the bank until next week. He kept that up for more than a month and I finally told him that I would go to the police even though I would be in trouble with the Immigration department. Well, Jorge disappeared with my passport. After that, I had to find a way to make a living since I was under age and had no real identification to apply for a job. Well, that is my story. Every once in a while I feel so bad that I have to take some drinks to be able to shake the depression from my mind. That's what I was doing just now."

Jordon was deeply moved, it was so typical of the pimps to use women to support them without the slightest regard that they was destroying a life so that they live off the efforts of others. "I'm so sorry that you have had such a tragic life and have not experienced a decent kind of life." He covered her hand with his own and thought, here am I with 134 million dollars and feeling depressed because no one wants to come to Argentina with me. And here, this poor woman has had to suffer the degradation of living a life she had never wanted to live because of the viciousness and greed of another.

When Jordon placed his hand on Carla's hand, her survival motives whirled into action. She took his tender gesture to mean that he might be vulnerable to her continued need to survive. Placing her other hand over Jordon's, she asked, "Would you possibly be interested in coming to where I live. It is so rare that I meet and talk to someone as gentle as yourself. You must know I need the money but it is not just for that, it would be so beautiful to be with someone I chose for a change,"

"What sort of price would you be asking" said an almost giddy Jordon. He had never been propositioned by an attractive woman and the idea inflamed his imagination.

“Would fifty dollars be OK. We could have a bite to eat; I will make you some huevos rancheros to prepare you for your trip and then you can stay as long as you want. I will do everything you want me to do so that you will have good memories of Carla Perez.”

Jordon was overwhelmed., In one sense, Carla took over completely so that all he had to do was enjoy and exhilarate in what was taking place. She did things or allowed things that he had never imagined would or could be done. He would never have even imagined some of what Carla did. He thought, she is a true professional and knew every way to please a man. If only Nora was as expert as Carla but he quickly dismissed the thought as being too perfect.

His relations with Leah he hardly felt any enthusiasm for and often wished they would be over quickly. It was obvious that she submitted only because as a woman living with a man, it was somehow understood. But in her living with Jordon as a partner, she felt no compunction to do anything that society or traditions had usually dictated as woman’s role in the relationship such as cooking, cleaning or taking an inferior position in the relationship.

With Nora, the taboo against such a relationship made him feel excited and somehow confused but it was highly satisfactory. How many times had he fantasized that he was with Nora instead of Leah so that he looked forward to coupling with Leah only because of the fantasy.

He continued his interviewing various law and accountant firms since he had nothing to go by except recommendations from friends, business associates and he even returned to his school to talk with professors who were respected. He finally concluded that the best teams he would work with were those that still had the principals as working members. In large, prestigious firms, much of the work went to subordinates and only reviewed by the principals. In offices that were too small, he felt that there was still a lack of experience and since his estate was large, he needed firms that could handle large accounts. Ideally, two principals as partners with a staff of about 4 or 5 was what he zeroed in on.

Jordon had purchased the sheet music and strings Nora had requested and she received them some two or three days after Jordon sent them by federal Express. And what was happening with Nora? He nor his family had heard anything from her since her e-mail to Jordon to send the sheet music she requested.

Nora, along with Ana and Iríde, the two daughters-in-law of Don Fernando, had decided on introducing a cultural program that had long been absent in the Estancia. They

had decided to hold a large cultural event with the playing of classical music along with poetry readings. These were to be coupled with folk music and dance along with the typical foods that had been replaced in the modern diet. The old Marshall and Wendell square grand piano had to be tuned and they had to seek someone in Buenos Aires who was familiar with the square piano. The square grand piano was outmoded and its brilliance was lacking so that many concert pianists felt it no longer served to display the sounds which the newer or modern pianos rendered. The old piano would have to do. Nora played some remembered music and while she was a capable piano player, did not have the ear to notice what the piano lacked. The women, along with their mother-in-law were excited at this prospect of beginning a cultural project; they would have to clean the house and paint or repair anything that had until that time been neglected; they would need new dresses plus they would have to prepare invitations, plan a menu, find local musicians and dancers. It would be the beginning or the regeneration of culture out in the pampas. When Nora received the sheet music, it was decided that each of the women practice their parts alone so as to familiarize themselves with the music. It would be Ana, however who would set the interpretation of the music since she was the most sensitive to the nuances. They were giving themselves three months to learn to play together and it would be Ana who would lead. In all this time, Nora thought little, if at all, about Jordon's return and the possibility of having to leave but she decided, "I will not leave until we have our concert at Christmas and besides, the Estancia and the property belong to Jordon and so I am not really a guest but the hostess."

Meanwhile, Jordon, with two of the principals from the accounting firm and the law office started to visit and examine the inheritance. It was almost immediately concluded that the ranch and the cattle were a losing proposition and would either have to follow what the other cattlemen did, i.e. use a feed lot to lessen the time for getting the cattle to market and growing crops that in a matter of months could be sold in a very lucrative market.

Jordon listened carefully and thought about his Uncle Paulo's wanting to save the Argentine culture and its dependence on the open pampas to bring the finest beef to the world's markets. He also thought about Don Fernando's enthusiasm and gratefulness that there was someone who wanted to preserve important aspects of a country rather than just exploit and take profit wherever they could. He also thought about Nora's awakening to the land and its beauty and strangely even back to Leah who asked, "Does only profit become the gauge in which we measure our lives, and the Hell with everything else?"

At the same time, didn't he hire people to advise him? If he did not heed that advice, what was the purpose of paying them huge sums of money if he ignored their advice?

It was strange but every time he had to make a big decision, Leah's words came back to him, "You have a good job where you are advancing and being given more responsibilities; you make good money; you are not stressed and you sleep at night. You don't need an airplane or a boat or even a fancy car since you are content with the way you live. You would be doing yourself a big favor by rejecting the inheritance or turning the money over to charity."

On top of all that, he was finding some red sores and a pus-like secretion and it burned when he urinated. If it was just gonorrhea he could get a shot of penicillin; but what if it turns out to be AIDS, I could even infect Nora. Luckily, Nora is on the ranch so we would not be able to have any contact? Carla was right when she told me she would leave me some memories of Carla Perez.

So, this is the moment of truth. I have advice on one side and the opposite advice from another and now only I can make the decision. I suppose that is what it means when President Truman said, "The Buck stops here." It's ironic he thought, here am I hoping that I have gonorrhea! But just as bad, they found that Jordon had been infected with a genital herpes. He was told that there was no cure for it but that the disease went into remission when the body was not stressed. He was glad that he would be staying in Buenos Aires so that no possible contact with Nora was possible. Meanwhile, his hired attorneys and accounts were going through the books as to spending and earnings. After about one week, both teams were ready to give him an evaluation as to their findings. He listened and read the report on the real estate end of the business and the conclusion was that if he could, he should invest in the purchase of buildings in areas of the city where there was potential for growth and that had prices that were still low.

On the second report concerning the ranchland and the cattle, he was surprised to find that the cattle business was losing money. The report recommended that he abandon the feeding of the cattle on the pampas grass and instead invest in feedlot feeding. For the amount of time it took to raise a steer for market on free grass, he was utilizing grassland that could produce profit in 3 months rather than the 4 to 5 years use of the grass to feed his herd. He should convert the maximum amount of of pampas to the raising of crops that were marketable in the present time that could earn maximum profit. Also, the report indicated that he was paying 3 managers of his herds. Don Fernando and his 2 sons were being paid premium wages while only one manager was necessary. Also, while his Uncle Paulo had made

a commitment to continue the tradition of the old way of raising cattle, and the keeping on of Don Fernando was an unsound business practice. Perhaps Don Fernando had personal reasons since he made his fortune in Argentina but that the preserving of the traditions was the responsibility of the present government and not a nostalgic business man. As to the estancia, which is too large for even Don Fernando and his two sons, it was recommended that the building be renovated to serve as a dining room and lounge and that the estancia be used along with the other quarters as rooms for tourists. Further, if the grass lands were to be used for cash crops, there would have to be provision for the storing of grain until the grain could be shipped. There would be initial expenses in farm equipment, trucks and harvesters. While this machinery was expensive, the reduction in paying three managers instead of one plus the sale of the crops would help stave off the costs of equipment. The report went on to recommend that a manager knowledgeable in agriculture be hired to supplant the present cattle oriented managers. It is estimated that if these recommendations are applied, it is predicted that in two years, the ranchlands development along with the tourist accommodations would show profit enough to offset the costs of converting the ranch lands to a profitable business including the purchase of the farm equipment.

With the receipt of the two reports, Jordon felt he must spend time analyzing the recommendations before acting. He was deeply concerned about the replacing of the three present managers but concluded, even I know that three is redundant. But how to pass this information on to Don Fernando without causing trauma to the old man who had been born on the estancia as well as his sons and their families. Even Nora will be against the following of the recommendations, but it is either a business or a nostalgic preserving in which I have no real emotional ties. Jordon decided to send his advisers back to the United States and would have to take time to weigh what he was going to finally decide.

He phoned Nora and asked that she relay the message to Don Fernando that he would be arriving in two weeks after studying the recommendations made by his advisers.

In the meantime, he would spend some time in his Uncle's penthouse apartment. He wanted to renovate some of the space so it included a separate bedroom and a restyling of the bathroom by adding a Jacuzzi tub and a small attached gym for working out. Much of the furniture was very old and dated and the kitchen and bath were also old. A young architect was engaged and work commenced as soon as he had approved the plans. He also bought a new BMW and hired a chauffeur since he did not know his way around the city. A good Spanish teacher was found and he started in earnest to start studying. Also, he was under the

constant care of a physician to be sure that the venereal disease was under control and could not be passed on.

The first signs that something was not going well was when Jordon felt an extreme itching in his crotch. Examining himself, he found the tell tale eruptions of the herpes. Upon his return to the doctor, he was told that he had to eliminate the stressful occurrences in his daily life. It was just the opposite of what was happening. Each new decision; the having to break the news to Don Fernando and his sons; the reaction of Nora; the new plans for his tourist complex on the ranch. All mounted in a fearful stress on him. At first, he thought the inability to sleep was due to change in habitat or eating too much beef. He found that the only relief was to read but that too was not helpful. He was given some sleeping pills to help him sleep but the secondary effects made him feel worse and he decided to find other methods. He tried warm baths, massages and diets that would not tax his digestive system, none of which worked. Often, during a meeting where English was being spoken, there were times when the meeting lapsed into Spanish so that a better understanding could be had between his advisers. It was then that he found that he had dozed off for 15 to 20 minutes and what had transpired had to be gone over again. At times such as these, he found himself listening to Leah's words: "Money has no value unless you need it."

The two weeks was up. He had said that he would be going to the ranch to discuss some things with Don Fernando. How, he wondered, will I be able to tell him that I will no longer be needing him or his sons the ranch and that I am going to turn the estancia into a tourist complex and the grasslands to corn? His whole life, and his sons will be involved and what he inherited from his family will cease after I tell him of my decision, but I cannot let sentiment stand in the way. Jordon had travelled by car, this time with the architect and an assistant to make measured drawings of the estancia and the other buildings that he needed to remodel.

When they arrived, they were met by jubilant Nora and a glowing welcome from the rest of the family. "Wait until I tell you what we are planning for Christmas," she trilled. "You will be as thrilled as we all are." And then, "But you don't look well, are you ill? She hastened with a great surge of emotion and joy. "Come sit down and have some iced tea and rest and I will tell you what excitement we all feel."

With a forced but sickly smile, he said, "Yes, tell me what is making you so happy?"

Like a young girl, she enthused about their attempt to re-initiate culture out here in the Pampas, something she said that disappeared for more than 100 years. She went on to say, "It is not just an attempt to bring back culture but is also an answer to those feel that the Argentine traditions of raising cattle and giving the world the best beef is lost. We will show that traditions and culture can exist even on the plains and not necessarily only in the big cities. I am so excited, the most excitement I have ever felt ever. And to think, you are mostly responsible for it all. You, a Gringo, not even part of the Argentine people are doing what the rich Argentines have neglected or refused to do. I am so proud to be a part of it and of you who has the sensitivity and goodness to be leading them into an important role for this country."

In the meantime, Jordon had asked that the entire family sit in the large living room. Just as Nora was about to continue but Jordon held up his hand and said, "Wait, I must tell you some facts that will mean bad news. They all looked at Jordon with incomprehension, all that is except Don Fernando who spoke no English. Don Fernando's black eyes pierced the barrier of language and looking into Jordon's eyes, he knew immediately what Jordon was going to say. He had been ranching too long not to know that the ranch was not paying for itself.

Jordon began, his eyes riveted into the massive oak table they were sitting around. "The simple fact is that the ranch is not only not making money but is in fact losing money. I am sure my Uncle Paulo was aware since his papers show the amount of loss over the years. As to why he continued carrying the loss, we cannot know but perhaps, he was paying Argentina back for all the riches he amassed.

I have gathered you all together so that you will know what I have been advised to do and what I have decided to do. Without going into too much detail, I have been advised to discontinue ranching in the traditional way. I have decided that we would feed the cattle in a feedlot and turn the grasslands into paying crops such as corn and soy meal. To manage the crops, I am interviewing several agricultural managers. I have also been advised that the estancia is too valuable as a home so I have decided to renovate the old estancia into a tourist ranch. There I will be able to keep a small herd of cattle and an adjoin property as a grassland. The estancia will be kept in the traditional form and design except we will install modern plumbing and build a swimming pool. As you may have noticed, I arrived with two men; an architect and his assistant who will be measuring all the buildings and noting the condition of the structures."

“I now have very sad news, it is that I will be replacing Don Fernando and his sons with managers who are familiar with running the tourist part and an agricultural manager to manage the crops. I will be asking everyone to vacate after the present year so that the work can commence in early January. Again, I am sorry to bring you this bad news but It is necessary if the business is to prosper.”

There was a stunned silence broken only by Nora’s rising from the table in such a way that her chair was knocked over with a loud bang on the floor. No words were spoken and they all sat with the look of uncertainty on their faces. There were the mixed thought of where to settle, where to find work, how to face these unexpected events?

Nora fled to her room and slammed the door shut. When Jordon tried to talk to her, she rasped, “Don’t you dare ever try to talk to me again. You and your advisers, you decide on life with a pencil and an adding machine. There is never anything but pure business; expansion, profits and to hell with anything that takes into consideration human feelings. I am going to go back home and I hope I never see or hear from you again. You are a hypocrite, you with your millions. Now he lords it over everyone because he is now a big man. I am ashamed at what you are doing to that family, especially Don Fernando who knows only this as his home. After 79 years, you are throwing him into the pampas. It was people like you that I was running away from and then, to find the worst of them as my own brother. You should be ashamed, you brought me here and now I am telling you to send me back to New York, that is if it is not too much of a loss.”

Jordon left to go, where? There was no talking to anyone and feeling the reproachful eyes of the women was very painful. However, Don Fernando came to him while Jordon was sitting dejectedly on a log. Putting his hand on his shoulder he said, “Don’t worry my son, we will find a way.” Even though the words were in Spanish, somehow Jordon realized that Don Fernando was not condemning him. He thought, “This is a gentleman, a feeling human being who understands how terrible I feel about what I had to tell them. I shall make sure that he receives everything to keep him from want.”

The simple gesture of understanding and the gentle touch of compassion were the first seeds of a new awareness being sowed in a distressed soul. Jordon did not know it but his inner being was questioning every move and decision he had made thus far and more and more he saw that every decision brought pain to himself as well as others. All the night through, his brain was riddled with questions to which he had no answers. He knew only that at one time, he was worry free, he could breathe without pain, he was able to smile at each

new day whether it be sunny or cloudy and that he looked forward to seeing what would transpire.

The next morning, Jordon got up very early. The sun was just starting to part the darkness and the fragrance of the dew heavy grass permeated his lungs. He went to the stable and asked that a gentle horse be saddled for he wanted to ride out and be alone for a few hours. Upon being asked if he knew his way around, Jordon said “No but that he would be all right.”

The stable man said, “OK, you must know that there are no trails but if you get into trouble, just align yourself with the two peaks of the mountains and you will at least know you are going in the right direction and not in circles. You must take a large canteen of water for it gets very hot in the afternoon; and don’t forget, the horse needs water too.”

Following the advice, he rode in a line along the two peaks of the mountains. He had to have the sky draped over the prairie so that nothing interfered with the sky and himself. About three hours into his ride, he felt the early morning sun and knew it would be a hot day. By this time, the sky was almost white with brightness. Everywhere he looked, he could see the heat waves distorting the horizon and his mouth started to dry. The horse had slowed considerably and he did not know whether the mare was tired or thirsty or both. A little way ahead, a single tree grew. It was more like a large bush. Had it been planted by some bird dropping or perhaps even the wind might have brought it. He brought the mare to a halt to relieve himself and had forgotten to tie the mare to the bush. The mare, thirsty and very smart to the ways of the pampas turned for the only place where she could get water and started at a trot too fast for him to catch her to return to the stable. His canteen of water was tied to the saddle horn and the sun was really starting to burn through the early mists. The humidity was like being in a steam bath. As he started after the mare, he noticed that her hoofs had left something of a trail. He looked back to see whether he was in alignment with the two distant mountain peaks and silently thanked the stable hand for telling about the two peaks. The pampas grass waved in front of him until he felt as if he was in the middle of the ocean, there was no way you could tell in which direction you were walking. Along with the steamy mists, the insects started to fly out in all directions and he felt frightened. Was the silent hand of Fate meting out this punishment for his callousness in wanting to plow under the pampas grass to plant corn?

He felt the sun murderously beating down and along with being without direction started to feel dizzy. His first thought was that he would try to lie close to the roots of the grass and in that way protect himself from the sun but the grass stems grew so closely

together that his attempt was foiled. The sun at this time was merciless. Perhaps he should have eaten some breakfast for his stomach felt strange.

Back at the ranch, one of the hands said, "There's Menina, where was she coming from? and see, she is saddled."

Immediately, Don Fernando questioned the stable man as to why was the mare out and who took her out. The stable man told him that "the Gringo took her out at about 6:00 o'clock this morning and that he said he was going to ride out in the pampas."

"You fool, didn't you know that would be dangerous for a man with no knowledge of the pampas to ride out. Why didn't you tell someone? Looking at his watch he said it's 8:00 o'clock. That means he must be between three and three and one half hours away. By the look of Menina, she must have trotted all the way here so maybe Mr. Marsh is only a few hours away." Turning to the stable man, he said, "Water the horse and keep her in the shade." To the Gauchos he said, "I want four of you to see if you can pick up his trail and bring plenty of water and a hat."

They found Jordon about two hours away from the estancia. He was pale and his heart was beating very fast. It was Paco, Don Fernando's son who asked, "What made you do such a foolish thing as to ride out in the Pampas alone? With no landmarks, you could have died or been bitten by a snake? There are many tropical rattlesnakes and the Fer De Lance living there. Or, you could been attacked by a Jaguar or been exposed to mosquitoes Only men experienced in understanding the land can go out alone and even then only on horseback. Not even an experienced Gaucho will travel by foot."

They carried him to the coolest of the house and applied cold cloths to his head to bring down the temperature of his body. In the midst of all this calamity, Nora, having forgotten her ill will toward Jordon came up to him and said he was a foolish little brother all over again. Her eyes brimmed and she said, "What would I have done without my little brother to scold?"

Jordon remained at the estancia for three more days in which he thought over the events that had taken place with this latest episode. Was this what his life would be with all these responsibilities? On the fourth day, he decided to return to Buenos Aires and confer with his lawyers.

Was he insane, he thought?" Am I actually thinking of renouncing this legacy, which has brought so much discomfort and pain not only to my family, but to myself as well? I would never have agreed to use the services of Carla Perez if I had not been so distraught and

discouraged. I would have been healthy without some venereal sickness that cannot be cured. I felt everyone was abandoning me although perhaps, it was just that I inwardly realized that I was unable to take on such a responsibility alone. How difficult it is to admit one's shortcomings but I should be thankful that I may be able to rectify the damage I have already caused. Some of the ideas were good like turning the estancia into a tourist ranch where many more people could enjoy the traditions of the Gaucho and where Don Fernando can remain until his final days with the ranch intact. His sons can manage the cattle part of the estancia while he plays host to the tourists.

Suddenly, he felt free to breathe and sensed a great load off his mind. For the first time in weeks he had an appetite and he also sensed that his thinking was clearer. Before he could change his mind, he called his attorney's and told them what he proposed to do. As far as the real estate holdings, he would sell the buildings and properties and have the money used to finance the renovating the estancia until it could make a profitable return to be self sustaining. Also, he would build a modest museum in Buenos Aires where too many of the people were too far away from the Pampas to realize that it was a major tradition that needed to be kept for Argentina.

Jordon was feeling exhilarated. He had actually done something he never thought possible for him to do. He was giving everything up to return to a life that was of his own making. What difference did it make if people thought he was insane? He only knew that he wanted to return to the life he had.

Anxious to get back to the estancia, he felt a mixture of pride and foolishness. He knew that Don Fernando and his sons would be happy even though they would not be able to understand his decision but he also knew that Nora would be happy for his decision. When his car suddenly approached the estancia, he observed a harassed Don Fernando issuing orders to vacate and empty the buildings of all the debris that had been collected over the many years. With his pride intact, he followed the orders of the new owner and was without bitterness. "That is what life is, a series of changes; good for some and not so good for others but we must accept those changes and continue on and not yearn for what once was," he said.

Gathering the entire group again, Jordon disclosed his plans; the ranch would remain but would also be renovated to bring tourists interested in the Argentine traditions.

Silence, then a cheer from everyone. Don Fernando proposed a real fiesta with everyone connected to the estancia to attend, including the Gauchos, the help, the maids,

everyone. Since it was already Thursday, he suggested Saturday so that musicians could be hired and the preparations made for a real asado.

Jordon was feeling happy. He felt that there was a joy and a sense of peace to what could have been a turning point for many of the people at the estancia. Wandering off alone, Jordon sat on the edge of a watering trough for horses. He sat alone musing and feeling good about himself. He was so absorbed that he did not hear or see Nora approaching. Placing her hand lightly on his shoulder she said, “That was really wonderful of you, thank you. Not only from me but to all those people you made happy and secure.”

As Jordon turned to face her, he said, “I guess I will be returning to New York but I can honestly say, that the experience is on I shall carry all my life. Will you be sad to leave all this?”

“Jordon, I have decided to remain here in Argentina. What I left has almost been forgotten and I find that for the first time, I really feel that I am me. Can you understand me and do you know how much this all means to me? I feel happy and at home. Of course I will miss you and our parents but hopefully, you will all come down to celebrate the opening of the new tourist ranch. When will you be leaving?”

“I think it would be better for me to leave tomorrow, there is still so much to do with all the paperwork and the legalizing of the procedures.”

“Do you want to come to my room tonight, I would like that very much?”

“Thank you Nora, but it would be better if I left you as your little brother. I somehow feel that I want to remember our being together as something that was pure passion and not something that we planned before hand. In that way, those nights will remain with me as something pure and beautiful, something I could never hope to find again.”

THE END

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