

NATIVIDAD

CHAPTER ONE

IT WAS Nineteen Hundred and Sixty-one in the year of our Lord. In those days the leaders of America were most incensed that Communism had taken the land of Cuba. So too the new government of Cuba was greatly displeased that America had secretly taken its children on the pretext that they were saving them.

2. And living in the city of New York was an actress exiled from the land of Cuba called Eva. Her betrothed was an English advertising consultant by the name of Percy.³ And it came to pass that two months before the day of their legal union, Eva declared that she was three months with child. By the time she realised that her physician must have made a mistake, it was too late. Percy did not believe that the child could be his, for he was on business far away at the time of its conception. Eva was aggrieved that she could do nothing to persuade him otherwise.

4. And so Percy made it known to Eva's father, who happened to be a high-ranking official in the court of Fidel Castro, the King of Cuba, his displeasure, in the hope that he would come and take her away. Until then, he would renounce their betrothal but not put

her to shame, instead continuing to keep her, but in a separate dwelling.

5. One night Percy became so intoxicated that he fell into a deep but fitful sleep on a park bench.

⁶ A well-spoken man wearing a fedora and a belted overcoat appeared to him, saying "Behold. Marry your beloved and go to England. She speaks the truth. Verily I say until you, the child is of your seed and you are all in grave danger."⁷ When he awoke, his head was as if cloven in two.

CHAPTER TWO

FIVE months passed. During this time, Percy forgot about the dream and was too preoccupied with the demands of his profession and the infidelity of his once beloved to pay much heed to the host of vehicles regularly parked outside.

2. When it was made known to Percy that Federal agents were about to apprehend him for being a Communist spy, he knew that he had no choice but to flee to England.³ He found a listening instrument in his apartment but left it in its place.

4. Meanwhile, Eva's father had bade his time before he sent an agent of his own to persuade his daughter to return to the land of Cuba and bear her child there. But she refused.⁵ The agent said to her "Verily, if you come with me now, and bear this child in the land of

your forefathers, I shall guarantee you safe return to New York.”

⁶ Realising that her father had interest only in the child, she kicked her abductor in such a manner and with such force that he might beget no offspring of his own and ran for her life. ⁷ Then she pleaded with Percy to take her out of the country. He agreed to this but only on condition that she spoke quietly so that no-one might hear them and promised to have the child given away.

CHAPTER THREE

THE day before Christmas Eve, word came to the FBI of Percy and Eva's intended departure, and this so enraged them that they ploughed every possible furrow to discover their destination. ² London they were told. So a Federal agent was sent to the airport to prevent their escape.

3. Percy and Eva arrived there only to find that they were followed by not one, not two but three men. One looked like an FBI agent, another was the man who had assailed Eva; the third man Percy recognised as the stranger in his dream. They seemed none too pleased that the others were there. ⁴ It was for this reason alone that Percy and Eva reached their flight without incident. 'Twas the last flight before Christmas.

5. During their journey, Eva protested her innocence anew. But still Percy's heart was cold.

6. Once in the land of Percy's forefathers, they got through the airport as fast as they could to confound the Federal agent. Then when they hailed a taxi to take them into the city of London, where they had booked a hotel for the night, they saw the Cuban agent.

7. Followed by two taxis, Percy and Eva finally arrived at the Waldorf Hotel, exhausted and sore afraid. But their reservation was not to be found and there were no more rooms. ⁸ Percy flew into such a rage that he struck fear into the receptionist, so he was informed by the manager that if they did not leave, they would call the police. Meanwhile, Eva's pains had begun and snow was nigh.

9. Their fear made greater by the sight of the third man lying in wait outside the door, Percy instructed the next driver to take them to the mansion house of an old friend in a place called Bethnal Green.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHEN they arrived there, not a soul was to be found, the doors and windows were locked up and twilight was nearly upon them. So Percy, knowing the place from his boyhood, found them refuge in the mews behind his friend's dwelling

house. He looked about him but there was no sign yet of their pursuers.

2. And once Percy had found a lamplight, he went up into the loft with it, knowing that even though it would guide their pursuers, they had no choice.³ And he made for Eva a bed of mattresses and blankets that were packed away in a chest. And once he had made her comfortable, he gathered all manner of implements so that he might defend them.

CHAPTER FIVE

AND it came to pass that the light did shine through the window and betray them.

2. A voice from beneath them cried up "I know you are there. I am come to help you."³ And when Percy asked why he should be believed, the voice said "I say unto you I am coming up now."

4. And when he had ascended, Percy saw that it was the man in his dream. But before Percy could smite him, the stranger put down his weapon and held forth his badge so that Percy could see under whose authority he had come. He was a special agent of the CIA by the name of Armstrong.⁵ And when Percy asked why he was here, Agent Armstrong said "Tis classified".⁵ At that moment the birthing began in earnest.

6. Then it came to pass that the Cuban and the Federal agent were

below them and gunshots could be heard.⁷ And Percy heard the Cuban say to the American that he only wanted the child; the American to the Cuban that he wanted only the Englishman.

8. But when they heard Eva's screams, they took pity on her and conspired to cease hostilities.

9. So the American cried up into the loft to offer their assistance. And once they were ascended into the loft, they put down their weapons and introduced themselves as Comrade Rodriguez and Federal Agent Young.

CHAPTER SIX

MIDNIGHT came and the babe left its mother's womb to utter its first cry and to the sound of much rejoicing.

2. From her belongings, Eva took a headscarf bearing the single star on red of her motherland, and in it she swaddled her newborn.³ Then she laid her in a drawer filled with hay and blankets, saying "For unto us a daughter is born. And her name shall be called Emanuelle, for she entered this world on the same day as our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. And Agent Young pulled a gold coin from his inside coat pocket and pressed into the infant's hand.

5. And Rodriguez drew from his pocket a cigar but pressed it instead into Percy's hand.

6. Then Special Agent Armstrong took from his coat pocket a small flagon of whiskey and pressed into Eva's hand, saying "Verily, that is the best I can do."

7. Percy and Eva thanked them for their gifts. Then Percy whispered to Eva that he would raise the babe as if she were his own. ⁸ And Agent Young said "But she is your own." ⁹ And Rodriguez said "Tis true. Behold her eyes. And behold her nose."

10. Then Agent Armstrong said "While you were away, our eyes were on your house. If she had deceived you, we would have known it." ¹¹ Young and Rodriguez voiced their accord, for all he had said was true.

12. Knowing for certain now that he had falsely accused his beloved, Percy wept.

13. Then the three agents conspired amongst themselves in order that they might tell their masters the same story.

14. Before the three men bid Percy and Eva farewell, Armstrong said to Percy "You do know that this is not over". ¹⁵ And Percy said to him "Indeed."

16. And within the hour an ambulance came to take mother and child to the safety of a fine, warm hospital bed.

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