***El Pessebre***

***Chapter 21***

 **What was there retain a fiery Caribbean revolutionary within the confines of a threadbare bookstore on New York’s Upper West Side for the better part of a decade? What had brought about the transformation of a leather-skinned sun-burnt organizer of rent strikes in Puerto Rico’s highlands to a sedentary yet far from doting 40-year old man? Why had he chosen to trade the fulfillments of a life of great hardship in the field, for the anonymity of a tedious business venture in the chief metropolis of the detested Imperial power?**

 **Antonio Rodriguez asked himself this once more as he stared at the rows of shelving in the Red Star Book Emporium with irony and amusement. It was 11 AM on a weekday in early June, 1981. The morning was gray and windy; yet it appeared that the clouds would not last past noon. It wasn’t easy for a man who’d traded gunfire with the police, the National Guard, even the military police of the American navy on Vieques island, who’d been involved in skirmishes and impromptu battles from a dozen illegal squatter occupations, who’d been tracked like a hunted animal through 4 Latin American countries, to reconcile himself with permanent exile, to be forced to channel his fighting spirit into the most innocuous of all literary occupations, the manager of a bookstore. How could he continue to sit around waiting for hours to sell books to a clientele of infinitesimal proportions?**

 **He could not have endured it had the enterprise been other than a front, a fraud perpetrated upon the enemy. His real work began after 5, when he’d locked the grill gates enclosing the store and its display window at 6 PM; a brief return to his rooms in a squalid building on the Lower East Side for dinner, followed by 2, sometimes 3, taxis to his offices on the second floor of a walk-up in the south Bronx.**

 **The office was the hub of a great networking system supported by more than 20 Latin American and Puerto Rican political parties, including the HIPR, Peruvian Liberation Front, Columbian Party of the Disinherited, the Argentinean Mass Action Against Fascism, the Mexican Zapatistas, a party in Guatemala calling itself simply “The Obscure Bird of Night”. In its rooms were 20 filing cabinets for paper documents, 10 for microfiches, 3 Apple computers and word processors, 4 telephones, cartons of floppies and photographs; staggering quantities of information for its time and place.**

 **The clandestine contributions from these political groups amounted to about $70,000 a year. Part of it was used to cover the debts of the bookstore, part to cover the costs of his Spartan lifestyle. The rest, amounting to some $50,000 a year, were poured into the activities of these offices. Throughout the 1970’s Antonio’s operations had rescued hundreds of political prisoners from imprisonment, torture or death, had provided emergency assistance for the thousands of refugees pouring across the borders of Latin America in the wake of juntas, coups, civil wars, victims of the Nixon-Kissinger policy and Operation Condor.**

 **70 hours was a normal work week for Antonio; 20 at the store, 50 in the office. At times of crisis or during emergencies there were no time limits. If the survival of a whole village of Indians in the Chilean Cordillera depended on a few phone calls to the right people, there could be no question of sleep until these calls had reached their destinations. There were many days each month when the bookstore was managed by volunteers.**

**Its offices were irregular at the best of times; to avoid suspicions Antonio made certain that it never stayed closed for more than 2 weekdays at a stretch.**

 **The store was closed a few days out of every month for taking inventory cleaning, dusting shelves and books, putting them back in their proper places, unpacking shipments of books. Antonio knew the titles of every book in the store and had read most of them from cover to cover. He knew what he’d sold and whatever had been stolen. No shop-lifter ever escaped detection, and none were ever apprehended, exposed, arrested. Given the chance, Antonio would have gladly given away all of his books rather than sell them. There was much that was doctrinaire but little that was bogus in his professed socialism.**

 **Antonio was generous is acknowledging his dependence on his assistants, largely students from CCNY, Columbia and Hostos Community College, yet also some dedicated revolutionaries like himself. He could call upon them at a moment’s notice and paid them well. Antonio felt a visceral antipathy for every detail of the day-by-day functioning of a business venture in a capitalist society. The fundamental paradox involved in making a profit over one’s competitors through juggling the prices of editions of Mark and Engels, horrified him. Nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to come into the bookstore some day to discover that a gang of (hopefully Communist!) thieves had robbed him of everything!**

 **There were some personal rewards from managing the Red Star Book Emporium. Conversations with interesting customers, like the one he’d had with the 3 musicians the previous week. There were new books to read, old ones to re-read and odd distractions out in the street itself. Antonio lifted his eyes from his 10th re-reading of Marx’s editorials on the Paris Commune, to gaze through the dusty windows of the store and examine the street life on Broadway, filtering what he saw through the axioms of his political convictions, converting the universe around him into a novel of Socialist Realism.**

**Once again he noticed the woman, far too warmly dressed in a surplus array of cast-off clothes, wearily dragging two black plastic bags of randomly accumulated items back and forth across the front of the bookstore’s wide window. By Antonio’s count she’d done this 8 times already on that morning alone. She would wander up the street aways, then stop, as if she were recalling something she’d forgotten, then turn back.**

**Clearly she imagined that she was lost; which indeed she was, but in what sense? What was she thinking of? What was she looking for that led her to keep returning and going back, endlessly the same way? Was it possible to read in the possessiveness with which she clutched at her large trash bags, some caricature of Capitalism’s perverted obsession with accumulation? Was her madness, and most of New York City would judge her to be such, all that different from the city itself, a city that truly mad in far more serious ways?**

 **Now the sun was coming out from under the clouds; spring was definitely in the air, raising expectations, reducing tensions to the extent possible. A young man, his head bowed against the wind, walked past, 3 textbooks pressed to his side, probably a graduate student at Columbia. Did his determined step indicate a deeper purposefulness than that present in the milling crowds around him? Or did he in fact have even less of an idea of what he was doing that the lady with the plastic bags?**

 **A woman sitting in a car waiting for the red light to change, shifted her child from her left to right shoulder, foraging around in her pocketbook. Was she looking for keys, or small change to pay for the parking meter? So much of our lives are consumed by these tiny tasks! Reducing the number of such problems might greatly relieve the anxiety level of mankind…. perhaps; in a Socialist society, for example. Antonio laughed: even he knew that such Utopian thinking was foolish.**

 **It was 10:30 AM. The Red Star Book Emporium normally opened, if it opened at all. A stock clerk was due to arrive at 2. Antonio, already bored with his work, wanted to get back to his offices in the Bronx. Yet caution required that the store stay open. After 10 years he still had not gotten used to not being out in the field, at the center of the action.**

 **He got up from his desk, walked over to the door, and stepped out into the stairwell. The callous anarchy of New York City street life hit him in the face like the cinders and smoke of an active volcano. Cars were skittering about in both directions like cockroaches. On both sides of the street people were waking quickly, super-charged, filled with urgency, anger, even violence. Framing the urban landscape was a climate of doom, frenzied, active, irresistible, as if only the fear of death giving meaning to lives that otherwise appeared meaningless.**

 **But, to Antonio, the truth he sought was not to be found out in the streets. Truth was in the central mountains of Puerto Rico, the struggles of the peasants or, quoting Dylan Thomas, the beds of lovers. He turned back again and went inside.**

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 **3 blocks away at 87th Street, Wilfred Jensen was walking down Broadway, heading to the bookstore, impelling himself in the face of embarrassment and fear to another confrontation with Antonio Rodriguez. At the same time that Antonio was investigating faces and attitudes of the people he saw out in the street, Wilfred was doing the same, though his interpretations and conclusions were radically different. H responses were more immediate, more empathetic, simple emotional responses to indications of joy and sorrow, of success and defeat. He wasn’t interested in constructing causal chains, based on first principles, to explain the reasons for their behavior.**

**In as much as he was an artist, a practicing musician, Wilfred Jensen didn’t concern himself with making a deep analysis of why people behaved the way they did. Ultimately, he didn’t believe that it was possible to do so. To understand what they felt from a glance, deep or superficial, at their faces, was enough for him.**

 **What did Wilfred see? Pain, regret, remorse... a wry smile, the taut skin on the skull, faces twisted in the contemplation of a silly idea; self-pitying dispositions; priggish, (or piggish) mentalities. He imagined himself capable of instantly discerning both nobility and degradation. He believed these intuitions to be unerringly correct, never suspecting himself of bias, or snap judgments. His naiveté was both charming and admirable, though it led him into erroneous conclusions that could at times be seriously wrong. His perceptions were deep though not always accurate, a subtle distinction. He could gather up, at a moment’s glance, a scattering of details, from which to draw far-reaching conclusions; yet often far away from those elemental perception which, without the need for intellectual reflection, lead one immediately to the hearts of others.**

**As an accomplished musician, Wilfred’s thoughts were always surrounded by a shimmering web of musical associations.**

**In Wilfred’s world, events were connected by leitmotif. The process, though as intellectual as any other, was not analytic; precise, yet far from scientific. Nothing entered his consciousness as neutral fact; perceptual changes were saturated with meaning before their conscious recognition. In his own way his efforts to render coherent the world around him were as strenuous as Antonio’s, whose reductive approach transformed all things into pages of a Manichean struggle between Good and Evil.**

 **For example: Wilfred observed the same woman dressed in black lugging her two plastic garbage bags, wearily dragging herself back and forth endless many times on the block of 84th street. He also concluded that, in some mysterious way she’d gotten “lost” in New York City, the world’s most bewildering and most terrifying maze. Yet, coextensive with his observations he distilled several themes, like those of a grand symphony, themes like “purpose”, “destiny”, “desperation”, “seeking”, and so on, as if the world was being orchestrated by Mahler and she was the principal violinist. Were we not, all of us, dragging our bodies, so many bags filled with trash, through the thoroughfares of an evil city under a merciless sun?**

 **He was neither capable of nor interested in depositing the components of her mindless automatism into moral and political categories. She was not an object lesson on the absurdities of capitalism, but a timeless spectacle, one that had been played out infinitely many times in as many places, ancient Rome, Paris, Shanghai, even in the Philadelphia from which he had recently relocated.**

 **Like Antonio and many others, Wilfred would really have liked to do something for her; yet to imagine that this could be done through a radical transformation of society was completely foreign to his thinking. He’s never devoted a moment’s thought to the means of production of anything, whether it be shoes, sugar cane, cellos, paper clips... save perhaps in that civics course in high school. A picture in his textbook illustrated the scheme on the of the pyramid of labor that, beginning with the sowing of wheat seeds on a farm in Kansas, ends with the bowl of cereal on his breakfast table. Somehow he saw no connection between this and the lugubrious sight of the baglady dragging her plastic garbage disposal bags up and down the street.**

 **Yet, quite unconsciously he’d begun speculating on where she came from, what she’d been doing all her life (she looked to be in her fifties), if she was literate, had any education, if she’s spent time in the world of institutions and hospitals where she slept at night. What were her tastes in music, he wondered?**

**Wilfred was incapable of lifting evidences of a common humanity to some universal abstraction like the dialectical process or the Oedipus Complex. In addition to lacking the educational background that might predispose him in that direction , so much of his mind was filled with music 24 hours a day, that even his interpretations of observed human behavior came out in the form of musical themes.**

**From waking to sleep, and even through his dreams, themes from an immense catalogue of studied and heard masterpieces dominated his inner ear, sometimes with little connection with whatever else he was thinking, or what was going on around him: phrases from the Brahms Requiem mixed with the Schumann Cello Concerto; to be followed by one of the frenzied themes from Beethoven’s 7th Symphony, followed by a long passage from Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. One might call it a form of professional tintinitus; it afflicts all professional musicians to a greater or lesser extent.**

 **At 85th street, Wilfred stopped to wait for the red light to change. Across Broadway on the other side he recognized a young flutist, walking with rapid strides: to a rehearsal? To give or receive a lesson? Some combination of these possibilities? Wilfred didn’t really know her, he’d only encountered her professionally. They were scarcely even acquaintances. He conceded that she might even be hurrying to some appointment not unrelated to music, reasons of family, income, illness … why not love? One thing was certain within a comfortable margin of error: she was not running off to a rendez-vous with a band of exiled Puerto Rican political radicals!**

 **Wilfred asked himself again, as he did repeatedly, if his morbid obsession with the death of Anne, his rushing about to uncover some hypothetical terrorist organization, might not have a negative effect on his musicianship. It added another dimension to his life, though hardly at the level that her death had robbed him of one; but it did divide his energies. Totally wrapped up in his reflections, his doubts, his guilt, his perennially renewed insecurities, Wilfred stood for 10 minutes or at the display cases of the Red Star Book Emporium, unable to recall what had driven him to come here.**

 **From the chair behind his desk, Antonio noticed a bundle of indignation and confusion, loosely identifiable as the body of Wilfred Jensen, casting a long shadow across the field of his display window: body**

 **“Well, just as”, he thought:” I thought!” He had assumed that Wilfred would be returning. His own troubled existence had led him to recognize that was a story lurking in the background of Wilfred’s exaggerated response at their previous meeting.**

**He stood up and went into the back room to put on a kettle for tea.**

 **Describing the interior of the Red Star Book Emporium is something of a challenge; indeed we are going to go over it a second time, picking up on details that were of necessity glossed over during our first visit. The first thing that caught Wilfred’s attention when he entered was that as a bookstore, it was totally without frills, that its atmosphere was completely reductive and intellectual. On the positive side it had been stripped of all the tiresome incentives that commercial bookstores display to encourage people to buy; to buy anything, as long as they are buying. This was not only because the philosophies of both the owner and its contents were heavily indebted to Karl Marx, but also because, being a front for his real work, Antonio had little interest in making a profit from the enterprise: no Hallmark cards, cheap Gothic romances, detective or cowboy pulps, decorative stationary, etc. Excepting Marx’s Das Capital itself, there were no best-sellers in the stock, apart from certain indigestible political tracts that citizens in communist nations are obliged to buy, read or even memorize. Aside from the bins of castaway paperbacks in the doorway, everything was scholarly, political or polemic. The fiction had also been selected to reflect the views of the owner.**

**This stock was arranged on shelving fastened on the walls, on bins in the center of the room, two floor-to-ceiling bookshelves in the front room and six in the back.**

 **Although Antonio did not smoke an ashtray stand had been placed beside a tattered easy chair. Lighting was supplied by a range of fluorescent bulbs across the ceiling, and a floor lamp beside the antique counter that held the cash register. This lighting was harsh, though bright and sufficient for reading. Antonio encouraged clients to sit in chairs around the room and read as long as they wished without being under any compulsion to buy.**

**Faded posters, most of them a decade old, were hung about the walls: rallies for El Salvador, for Chile, Argentina, Brazil, notices of marches and demonstrations in Union, Herald or Washington Squares, or the UN Plaza. These brilliant, often garish posters supplied the only patches of color in an otherwise drab interior: flaming oranges, greens, reds, intense black, bold typography communicating inflammatory rhetoric. A line of shelves holding newspapers, pamphlets and magazines from Latin America began from the front door and went a dozen or so feet into the interior. Most of Antonio’s customers came in to buy these.**

**A bulletin board hanging near the door held scraps of paper, tacked, stapled or glued, announcements offering items to sell, Spanish or English lessons, offers to do baby-sitting, and listings of rooms and apartments. About 30 customers a day came in for the newspapers, perhaps 20 for the magazines, and another 20 just to peruse the bulletin board. Sales of the books averaged a few dozen a week, at most. In keeping with its function as a front, Antonio padded the books with sales of merchandise of his own invention to ally the suspicions of the IRS. This was also a convenient way to launder the money coming in from his network of organizations.**

**Antonio opened the door and stepped into the street. “Well, hello, young man! Don’t you want to come in?”**

**Wilfred entered the store with his right hand thrust before him: “I want to apologize for my behavior the last time. I was very rude.”**

**Antonio made a self-deprecating gesture; they shook hands: “Don’t be silly. Why don’t you sit down? I’m making some tea.” Antonio excused himself to go into the back .A few minutes later he returned with a tray, cups, tea pot and some cookies.**

**“So; what brings you back to visit a tone-deaf Marxist?”**

**“I needed to come back. There are some things I have to talk to you about.” Antonio laughed: “Anyone who grows up in Puerto Rico knows that musicians are an odd tribe. Over there our musicians fight in public, just like politicians!**

**This was been going on for centuries, long before Pablo Casals put us on the map.”**

**At the mention of Casals, Wilfred stared at him with perplexity:**

**“I still can’t understand what you have against him. Musicians criticize him because he was a fossil, dinosaur when it came to contemporary music. But unlike so many of the older generation of European musicians who thought the same way, he did many things they wouldn’t dream of, like defying Franco and the American government , creating municipal orchestras out of his own pocket, and so on. Why is he everybody’s Public Enemy Number One?”**

**“I agree, Wilfred, his image has been grossly distorted, in both directions. And his legacy, even in music, is basically constructive. But, Wilfred: somehow I suspect that you did not come back here to talk about Casals…”**

**“You’re right. I have the impression that Puerto Ricans convert every issue into politics. ”**

**“In Puerto Rico even Bach and Brahms are political issues! They make a political issue out of the bathrooms! What is most remarkable is that, at the same time, most Puerto Ricans have no international perspective whatsoever. We’re typical of island peoples everywhere; we internalize everything.”**

**“I saw plenty of that, thank you, when the HIPR terrorized the Academy!”**

**Antonio shook his head and sighed, as if weary with having to explain the same thing over and over again: “Wilfred: that incident was dreadful. Why do you accuse the HIPR?”**

**Wilfred stammered: “That’s what everybody thinks … but when your fiancée is killed …”**

**A long silence followed. Antonio absorbed this quietly while considering his reply: “I see…I’m terribly sorry… I didn’t know that...” He drank some tea and examined the papers on his desk: “Why do you, personally, suspect the HIPR?”**

**Wilfred stood up; he walked, awkwardly, about the room, waving his arms in stiff melodramatic gestures:**

**“*Who the hell else could it be!* Unless it’s these *Djiberoz*, those ‘peasants of violence’! But my opinion is that they’re just a foil, a camouflage for the Hippers.**

**Why, they were *right there* on the *steps of the Academy*! Throwing mud! Bottles! Stones ! *Then they came back a second time!* That’s when they broke the nose of the wife of the governor! People like that don’t believe in the rule of law. They’re fanatics! They’re animals! “**

**“Antonio, I’ve spent six months, in Philadelphia and New York, trying to find the JV’s. From what I’ve been able to find out, there is no such organization. It must be a front and, judging from the activities of the Huelga that night, it has to be them! Give me some evidence that they didn’t do it and I’ll reconsider. Better still, tell me where I can find them!”**

**“Calm down, Wilfred! Come on; sit down.”**

**Antonio led Wilfred back to his chair: “I can’t tell you where to find the *Jibaros de la Violenzia*, but I can give you enough evidence to convince you that they aren’t the *Huelga para la Independenzia de Puerto Rico*.”**

**Wilfred allowed himself to be persuaded. In fact the responsibility of the HIPR had long ceased to be an article of faith, although he felt obliged to defend this thesis against perceived adversaries. Yet he felt he could trust Antonio. Better to clutch at straws than to have nothing to go on. Antonio continued:**

**“The Jibaros are obviously the figment of someone’s imagination. I’m in touch with most of the Hispanic revolutionary organizations groups in New York. Four months ago the Huelga contacted me and asked for help in uncovering headquarters, and names of the directors, of the Jibaros de la Violenzia. The Huelga was desperate to expose them. Its own survival is at stake!” Wilfred pondered this, his head lowered. At last he muttered:**

**“Whom do you suspect?”**

**“Wilfred: there can be no organization calling itself the Jibaros de la Violenzia. It is just barely possible that the name was chosen to mask the activities on the mainland United States, of some criminal organization on the island. There does exist a band of cutthroats in San Juan calling themselves the *Vigilantes Populares* : “popular vigilantes”. Why they think they are popular, I cannot imagine.**

**“They roam about all the islands of the Caribbean, doing stupid, vicious things just to get attention. Last month they shot and killed an American tourist on the Condado strip, the vulgar tourist area in San Juan for rich Yanquis: excuse me, Wilfred, I’m talking about people who bear no resemblance to yourself or any of your friends: gross, prejudiced ‘ugly Americans’ who don’t deserve a penny of the money they’ve acquired for themselves.**

**“Four punks were sitting in a car. Two of them stuck their shotguns through a back window and killed him. As they drove away, one of them shouted: *Viva la Independenzia*! The Vigilantes Populares are despised by the serious independence groups as ignorant playboys committing thrill murders. Drunk juveniles out on a joyride.**

**“Their car was tracked and two of the murderers apprehended. Now they are doing life sentences. Incidentally, if you ever visit San Juan, don’t be caught on the Condado after midnight.”**

**“Thank you; it’s a deal. In fact I do intend to go down this, maybe even this summer to participate in the San Juan Music Festival. But why would they attack a concert at the Academy of Music? Do they also operate in the US?”
 “They have been known to do so; yet always in the form of some spontaneous delinquency. In New York City they’ve terrorized some business conventions. They mugged a low-level politician from Spanish Harlem.**

**“They’ve never done anything in Philadelphia as far as I know. Their activities are principally in New York and Miami, where some of their exploits are notorious. Down in Florida they mingle with the drug cartels and give up all pretence of being political. They’re little more than moronic psychopaths.”**

 **“They sound to me, Antonio, like a Puerto Rican version of the ‘Hell’s Angels’.”**

 **“The analogy is a good one; however they come, by and large, from rich families. Yet, in considering their mode of behavior one must never lose sight of the Axioma *Numero Uno* of Puerto Rican life: *Everything is Politics*! Even the Vigilantes Populares prints up and distributes manifestos, childish screeds lacking any familiarity with critical or social theory. They chalk up graffiti with phrases like *Smash Capitalism*! , or *Go Home, Yanqui Mother Fuckers*! That’s their IQ level.”**

 **“They may think of themselves as San Juan’s Tupamaros, though they scarcely have the organizational ability to pull off even a short term kidnapping. The Academy stunt was beyond their capacity: forget it.”**

**“Why do you say that?”**

 **‘The combination of effectiveness with simplicity that one finds in this action demonstrates a level of intelligence far beyond their capacity. Random shootings of tourists on the Condado is about all they’re able to do. Mounting a bomb hoax in Philadelphia’s Academy of Music, then timing it in such a way as to cause the maximum amount of panic, soon after the chorus has come onto the stage and begun singing, is something one can’t imagine them doing.**

**“The perpetrator of the Academy massacre must have been able, from wherever he was located, to estimate the lengths of time of all the pieces in the first half of the concert, the length of the intermission and the approximate duration of the speeches. No doubt he was listening to the concert as it was being broadcast on the radio. He was familiar with the performance procedures of the Philadelphia Orchestra, the timing of intermissions, the kind of elderly widow one would find in the Box Office that late in the evening, and many other details familiar only to habitués of the Academy, which he most certainly was, and which the *Vigilantes Populares* most certainly are not. Then”, Antonio threw up his arms and laughed: “There’s that ridiculous press release!”**

 **Wilfred scratched his head and looked at Antonio with genuine surprise:**

**“What’s wrong with it? Typical Marxist-Leninist line, wouldn’t you say?”**

**“Rubbish, my very talented musician friend! Absolute rubbish! That document is a farce. A joke! It was dreamed up by someone who’s never read a line of Marx, who knows nothing about progressive thought! Who has never been to a single meeting of any *independentista* organization in his life! He may be Spanish, possibly Catalan. Latin American? Very doubtful. Puerto Rican? Don’t make me laugh!!”**

**Flames shot from Wilfred’s eyes, his heart beat faster as he was overcome with rage*: “You’re telling me, that there’s some “monster” out there who’s making fun of all of us!”***

**“That, Wilfred, is exactly what I am saying ! One doesn’t combine ‘strategic implantation of situations of violence’, with ‘boot-licking train of stooges’, with actions suitable to the Vigilantes Populares, with elitist reservations about the reputation of Casals, the kinds of objections that only composers and music critics make! But … “ Antonio leaned back in his chair, put his hands behind his neck to indulge in some well-informed speculation: “… you take someone with excellent education, good intelligence, an avid reader of the New York Times, enough to pick up what he imagines Trotskyist or Marxist rant is supposed to sound like, someone of Spanish .. as I’ve said I suspect Catalonian origins …above all someone who is very angry, a frustrated disappointed individual with a score of personal grievance, some justified, others largely imagined or, how shall we put it, derived from some unwillingness to face himself, to admit his inadequacies, but with a specifically focused hatred of the Philadelphia Orchestra as the root cause of all his sorrows and woes, a grudge against life as long as the Amazon River …!”**

**Wilfred scanned the titles on the bookshelves. He didn’t believe a word of Antonio’s theory, yet did not question his sincerity. He merely concluded that Antonio, human as the rest of us, could not accept the possibility that his own countrymen were capable of such an atrocity.**

**“I’m not following everything you’re saying, Antonio. If it wasn’t the work of Puerto Rican terrorists, who could it have been?”**

**Antonio qualified his observations: the Academy of Music hoax could have been the work of Puerto Rican nationalists, though for him, it lay well outside the domain of probability. He had, he admitted, n o hard facts; all of his evidence was based on inference.**

**He had worked on this case for some time, he confessed. To date he’d found no evidence that any revolutionary party, from any nation, was involved. It was not totally impossible that the Vigilantes Populares had played a role, though they would have had to employ intermediaries, professional musicians, journalists, musicologist. The mixture of advanced professionalism and naïve ignorance evidenced in the press pointed away from them, or from any group; it really pointed to a single individual…”The lone nut theory, right?” Antonio poured out another cup of tea.**

**Wilfred listened in silence, occasionally nodding his head. Talking with Antonio made him feel better. Clearly, Antonio was very well informed. From hanging around with musicians for 6 months, Wilfred had learned precisely nothing, apart from the general insight that professional by and large knew nothing about the world around them that did not relate to their professions.**

**Most of his friends and contacts were in music, or affiliated with it in some way. Occasionally a musician might boast of his or her connection with a prominent politician. It was unlikely that he would know anything about the activities of radical political groups.**

**Antonio Rodriguez was the kind of person he should have gotten in touch with in the first week of his arrival in New York! The irony of the situation was that he had, in fact, met him on the first day of his arrival, but not realized the significance of the encounter, and totally misjudged him. Antonio had integrity; they had their disagreements of course, but Wilfred respected him.**

**“I can call the local director of the HIPR right now, if you like.” Antonio offered, “He was released from prison just a week ago. They never had any evidence against him.”**

**Antonio lifted up the receiver and dialed the number of Rafael Montoya at the offices of the HIPR. He and Montoya spoke rapidly in Spanish. Placing a hand over the mouthpiece, Antonio turned to Wilfred and asked:”Are you free next Wednesday night?”**

**He wasn’t. He was playing in a concert that night. They finally settled on a date, Tuesday after the next. By the time Wilfred took his leave they’d agreed to meet in a restaurant on the Lower East Side at 7 PM.**

 **He was determined not to miss this appointment. He was due to leave a few days later, to participate at the Marlboro Music Festival , where he’s received a scholarship to study with David Soyer and participate in its orchestra.**

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