

he had had no pupils. As a technician, everybody said he was very bad, but 'el aire que tenía!' (the feeling—soul—spirit—he had!). Very sober. By the small hours, at a juerga, when everyone was half gone on manzanilla and coñac, he would ask for his first drink—a glass of milk.

'He was painfully shy,' Don Gerónimo went on, 'and one night we were in a bar in Triana and Manolo de Huelva was playing upstairs. The Michelangelo of all the guitarists who have ever lived! You know that guitar of his—terrible, hard as steel! He plays it, though—sits there in his bed with his overcoat on because he has something wrong with his chest and plays his terrible guitar, some variation he has invented, hour after hour, day after day, sometimes for weeks, months, until it is absolutely perfect. "Mi guitarra," he says, and won't touch any other. Well, poor Capinetti was scared stiff and wouldn't go up. They more or less lifted him upstairs in the end, so that Manolo de Huelva could hear some of his music, and when he came down his face was as long as a frightened nun's, saying: "When I played it, it sounded just like a drum! Just like an old drum!" Poor Capinetti—towards the end of his life he developed some kind of rheumatism and suffered dreadfully because all the flamencos just dropped him for the younger tocaóres. During the last years he was practically starving all the time, living in the most horrible squalor—all alone in his miserable room. We did what we could, you know. There is one man, Don Ángel Ribera, who does know all the soleá and seguiriya of Capinetti. Capinetti used to teach him, because he was an amateur. One day you must go and see him.'

According to Don Gerónimo, I did right to come to Cádiz. Not too big, like Sevilla, not too small like Jerez. Besides, in Triana, flamenco had degenerated into a night-club floor-show for tourists.

'They put on any old rubbish they can be bothered to do in between doing up their trousers and blowing their noses! Here we are less commercial.'

Juan Puebla was not interested in flamenco. It depressed him, and the flamencos depressed him even more. 'They're savages. Pay them five duros and they set up that dreadful wailing of grief-stricken woe. On and on, all night long, howling until the sun touches the mountains with gold! And then you have to gild their open palms with yet more paper.'

Aurelio and Efrén

At eleven o'clock sharp I sat at a table outside the Bar Europeo.

The heat of the day was being dissipated by a cold night breeze.

Silhouetted against the lights of the port, two stout figures, cloaked and hatted, approached the square, arm in arm. One was short and one was tall.

Recognizing the short one as Aurelio, I went over to greet them.

Aurelio silently extended his hand, his one eye half closed as if to say 'There!', and we went into the bar. He was wearing an English-looking tweed-cloth peaked cap. His tall companion, whose belly protruded like an enormous spherical tank, wore a brown Cordobés hat (the famous flat-topped, wide-brimmed hat of the sherry posters) and a brown suit. He was almost Olympian in his silent dignity. His grave square face never—during all the time I knew him—revealed more than a hint of amusement or more than a shadow of disapproval. His name was Antonio, and he was seventy-five years old.

The thin man with the skull-like face, whom I had seen with Aurelio on that first evening, was sitting in the same place and in the same posture as before. It was as if he had never moved. He was a singer called 'El Peste (The Stink)'—an oblique reference, I was told, to his pederastic habits. He claimed he was eighty-three years old. Some said this was an exaggeration, that he was barely seventy, while others said that he was past ninety. That he should be able to earn, at his great age, any income from his singing at all, however modest, was remarkable enough, but that he should be able to augment this income by intermittent services of mariconismo (homosexuality) was hardly credible. I was assured that he did. Further, among his current clients were rumoured to be a rich Moor from Tetuán and an electronics engineer from Seattle engaged in installing the communications systems at the air base.

When Jesús came limping in, Aurelio asked him how he had met me.

'Through Paco Ahumedo—you know, the one who works in the

Pescadero and lives in the house where you were born.'

'I must tell you this,' I said, and asked Aurelio, 'Are you superstitious?'

'Me? No.'

I told him about Paco and the novia who washed corpses in the morgue.

Aurelio slapped his thigh and ran over to tell Antonio, who had joined some friends in a far corner of the bar. Aurelio told the story, ending with a guffaw, and dragged Antonio back to show me to him. Antonio listened a moment and quietly drifted back to his friends.

Then Aurelio asked, 'Who is the best tocaor?*' With a quick glance at his companions, he added, 'Niño Ricardo?'

'Manolo de Huelva, but then I've only——'

Without letting me finish, he darted back to Antonio again and said in a loud whisper: 'He says Manolo de Huelva is the greatest guitarist! Who'd ever believe it?'

He came back and, looking at me closely with his one eye, said: 'And you are right, Señor, you are right! Who else, if you permit the question?'

'Paco Aguilera.* But nobody else seems to agree, for some reason.'

'Paco Aguilera,' echoed Jesús. 'There you are, what did I tell you?'

'Paco Aguilera,' Aurelio repeated, almost in a mutter. 'And Niño Ricardo? Too difficult, perhaps? Stylish, brilliant, marchoso, eh?*' Mm.'

We sat down at the table outside the bar, waiting for Efrén.

A small man, with straight black hair, sharp eyes and a sharp bird-like, or rather crow-like, face sat down with us.

'This is Rosiana, cantaor,' they said.

He wore a brown sports jacket that was rather stained and grey flannel trousers. He carried a handkerchief, folded smooth and exactly square, in his breast pocket. Every few minutes he pulled it out and dabbed his nose and mouth.

'A cold,' he said in his raucous voice. He leaned over to my ear and shouted, pointing at his mouth: 'A cold! Refria'ó!'

Then he leaned back in his wicker chair and said:

'You know Aurelio, the master of us all. His fame has spread all over Spain. Has it spread as far as London?'

'Even as far as London!' El Peste said. 'Isn't that true, Aurelio?'

'Ay, it's true,' Aurelio said. 'I went to London for the Coronation—did you see it? I'll bet I saw more than you did.'

I told him that all I had seen were a few plumes of cavalry helmets above the crowd, in drenching rain.

'Well, I sat in the lounge of the boat, and saw the whole function on

television, in the warmth, a bottle of manzanilla at my side, a present from Ambassador Primo de Rivera.'

He had gone to London, it appeared, to represent the art of flamenco singing at a Coronation banquet at the Spanish Embassy. He opened his wallet and gave me a card.

'That's the house where I stayed.'

It showed an address in Sussex Gardens, Paddington.

'I got lost in that store with the pillars along the front—something 'Eself.'

'Selfridges.'

'Eselfri—Selfri—Ojú! Well, anyway, I couldn't find my way out when a Spaniard came up and said, "Ola, paisano, can I show you the way?" "No thanks," said I, "no thanks at all, I'll find my own way, thank you. Good day!" And I wouldn't have anything to do with him, no, not I! Look, I bought this scarf—take a look, here.'

Aurelio pulled his brown woolen scarf from round his neck and gave it to me to feel.

'Feel that, eh? Wool from sheep fed on the rich grass of England.'

'Eso sí!' Rosiana said approvingly. He looked from Aurelio to me and back. The crows' feet at the corners of his eyes and the lines round his mouth increased the effect of puppet-like stiffness created by his pale face. As a matter of fact, which I did not understand at the time, this conversation was getting above his head. He did not know where England was, and it was confused in his mind with France and America. He could not read or write, and so a great deal of the world that surrounded him was unintelligible. He had never read a newspaper or a comic, a street-name, an advertisement or a pronunciamiento; the letters 'BAR EUROPEO' painted in black on the fascia of the café where we were sitting were indecipherable; he had never seen a geography book or a map. He had a watch, however, and he could tell the time, and he had had business cards printed with his name 'Rosiana' and address in script, and the words 'CANTAOR FLAMENCO' spread across the middle in clear sans serif.

'Rosiana,' I said. 'There is a mystery that perhaps you would solve for me. The fandangos of the province of Huelva. There is the Fandango de Huelva, known even to the English ladies of Gibraltar. But then there is the Fandango de Alosno, the Fandango de Paymogo, the Fandango de Valverde del Camino,* and I don't know how many more, all different and each with its own style of accompaniment. Who can tell me the difference between them?'

'I,' said Rosiana, holding his forefinger in the air. 'I. I am the only one in Cádiz who knows all the fandangos. They are my specialty. Have

you heard Canalejas sing the fandangos and fandanguillos?'

'Canalejas de Puerto Real? Indeed yes!'

'He learned them from me. I taught him how to sing the fandangos. All that he learned of that art he learned from me.'

'Then can you show me?' I said.

'Claro que sí.' He always emphasized tremendously the '*clar*' of '*claro*': '*CLA-ro que sí!*'

'I am speaking "en plan formál",' I added. 'En plan formál' means 'with formality', and is a polite way of saying, 'I shall pay you, of course.'

He tilted his head noncommittally and said: 'When Efrén has shown you what he has to show you, then send for me and we shall all get together. I am at your service night and day.'

'And where is Efrén?' I asked.

Rosiana turned to Aurelio, his hands thrown out. 'Aurelio, where is Efrén? What a lack of breeding!'

'Efrén es muy bruto, tu entiendes,' Jesús said. (Efrén is very rough—and brutal and coarse—you understand.) 'And he's very shameless (muy sinvergüenza) as well.'

'Si, muy sinvergüenza,' everybody chorused, '*muy, muy sinvergüenza!*'*

Almost at that moment a short stocky man, whose curly black hair ended in a straight line across the back of his neck, walked briskly past us into the café, carrying a black guitar-case.

'Here he comes!'

I had a glimpse of broad shoulders and a hideous blue-striped suit, of which the jacket was much too tight. (Don Gerónimo described it as a 'mess of flies' wings'.)

Efrén came out again and stood in the doorway. Glancing round us, he saw me, looked at Aurelio and, indicating me with his head, said, 'What's that?'

Rosiana tutted with indignation.

'That,' said Aurelio, 'as you so express it with your inimitable sense of courtesy and good manners, is an English friend of mine who has come to study the guitar with you. A good thing he doesn't understand the finer points of Castellano, say I! He'd soon see what a disgrace you were to the Spanish nation!' Aurelio swept his hand in an eloquent gesture that included all of us, the people sitting round tables outside the other cafés, the Town Hall, the surrounding sea and, in the darkness beyond, the mainland, the valleys, the castle and the villages sleeping in the distant mountains. 'What a disaster that his first visit to our beautiful country should be disfigured by a horrible degenerate animal like you!'

'I'm sorry,' said Efrén, with a shrug. Then he came round and shook me by the hand. 'The pleasure's mine.'

His short thick hair was touched with grey. His shiny face, a red boil on the prominence of his cheek, was square, with jutting jaw and beetling brows, beneath which his eyes, tiny and black, burned with extraordinary intensity.

'And just why should I teach this one anything about flamenco? The English are a race who go to every country and take the best things away with them.'

Aurelio got up, his one eye glaring, grabbed Efrén by the ear and pulled hard, jerking Efrén's head down.

'You'll do it because I say so! And I don't want to hear any of your filthy shameless tricks, or I'll get the city governor to put you away for a month, and if I can't do that I'll break your skull open with my own hands!'

By this time everybody was laughing, and we all got up. As we began to move away, Aurelio came hurrying over to me and said, 'Oiga, Geraldo!'

'What's the matter?'

His face close to mine, looking at me intently, he asked, 'Ha visto a Enrique? (Have you seen Henry?)'

'Enrique?'

Unable to contain himself, Aurelio was beginning to smile.

'El que te dió en el dique! (He who "gave it you" in the ditch!)

Unable to understand the joke, I smiled anyway, while everybody roared with laughter again. Efrén, in a paroxysm, clung to Aurelio and nearly collapsed on him, nuzzling his face against his overcoat.

(I asked Juan Puebla about this joke. 'Rhyming jokes, that's all,' he said. 'The place has to rhyme with the name.'

'Surely there's something else?' I asked. 'I thought it meant something obscene.'

'Claro, "gave it you" means "buggered you", but it's the rhyme that is essential.')

We went from the Bar Europeo to a café beside the Arco de la Rosa, which faces on to the Cathedral Square. The barman showed us through into a back room with bare white walls, lit by a single paraffin lamp standing on a long, bare wooden table. We sat round the table, and I got my guitar from its case. That it was a 'Petenera' and something of a curiosity was of no interest to Efrén. He picked it up, turned it over, banged two chords by pushing his thumb and thick black thumbnail across the strings, and gave it back to me.

'It's for girls,' he said to Aurelio.

They sat waiting. It appeared to me that two years of hard, and often seemingly hopeless, struggle had led up to this moment, in which I was surely about to make an ass of myself. Any amateur who has suddenly found himself in the midst of professionals will recall, I imagine with horror, the sensation. Aurelio's ear was accustomed to the support, as a matter of daily business, of the greatest guitarists of Spain—Ramón Montoya,* Manolo de Huelva, Niño Ricardo, Sabicas, the lot, and they said flatteringly to his face, 'Er* Cantaor de mas categoría hoy día é Usté! (The singer of highest and most serious reputation today is you!)

All went well enough, however, if somewhat tentatively and scratchily, until, commencing a Granadina, I was able to play, without noticeable mishap, a tremolo passage invented by Paco Aguilera, which I had learned from a gramophone record. The falseta is breathtaking in its audacity and power, and perhaps a faint echo of Aguilera's genius must have been audible despite everything, for at the end Aurelio pulled the peak of his cap farther down over his eyes and muttered 'Olé.'*

The ice was broken, the ordeal over.

'Well, how is he? What does he know?' Jesús asked Efrén brightly.

'Nothing,' said Efrén. 'Absolutely nothing.'

'Now *you* can listen a bit to the tones of Efrén,' Aurelio said. 'Efrén, play a little so he can hear them.'

Efrén opened his black case and took out one of the largest and most beautiful guitars I had ever seen.

'Santos Hernández,*' he said with a grimace. The Santos is the Rolls-Royce of guitars. His had mellowed to a deep golden orange. It was battered, split and joined up again in a dozen places.

He hoisted the guitar into position, glanced at his wicked-looking thumbnail and drove it down hard across the strings. A deep, rich major chord, in which a note was slightly off somewhere, reverberated round the room. Banging his thumb back and forth over each string, he tuned the guitar, sweating and straining as he twisted the wooden keys.

'Qué guitarrita más buena!' Rosiana said.

'Vamo' a ver, Efrén!' said El Peste.

While the men murmured and growled these words, Aurelio smiled and slowly shook his head.

Efrén started straight into the 'Cantiña', which is simply an 'Alegrías' played in C major,* instead of the more common E or A major. But I found that in Cádiz, the birthplace of all the various Alegrías, C major was the most popular chord position to play them in.

Efrén played with great power. It would be absurd to say that he had unusual skill, or made any show of virtuosity. Everything he did was unadorned. There were no complicated arpeggios, no whirl of notes, no

subtle tremolos, no tricks. Instead, the impression was one of irresistible rhythm, thunderous and thrilling ragéos and a repertoire of simple falsetas in which each note was clear and rounded and as distinct as the note of a bell.

All traces of affability gone, Aurelio sat hunched like a great devil, his cloth cap pulled down, his face a mask. Two upper teeth showed slightly in the middle of his drawn-down mouth, and one eye fixed balefully on Efrén's right hand. His fist beat out the strident rhythm with a complicated sequence of motions—partly by rapping with the knuckles of his clenched fingers, and partly by cracking the nail of his forefinger against the wood of the table-top.

Jesús, lolling in his chair, looked at me sharply and tilted his head sideways towards Aurelio, to make sure I was all attention.

At that moment the door opened and the barman, in a dirty overall and with his sleeves rolled up, came in, exclaiming: 'No, Señores! No, no! I'm sorry but that cannot be! I am truly sorry, but it's absolutely impossible. You know the regulations.' It seemed that the law stated that there was to be no singing or dancing after eleven o'clock within the walls of Cádiz without official permission.

During the anticlimax of everybody's getting up and leaving Efrén tried to teach me a falseta. 'Here's one for the Taranta,*' he said, but it was too difficult to learn in a hurry. For its effect depended on sleight of hand and a tricky doubling of notes on adjacent strings. He seized his guitar back and played it again, his mouth pressed flat against the shoulder of the instrument. He looked up grinning. 'Sounds like church bells, doesn't it?'

Then he played another.

'Here's a good one for you from the soleá. It's by Capinetti. Precious. But precious, I tell you. Isn't that right, Aurelio? This is a good one?'

Aurelio, at the door, turned and nodded.

'Yes, but hurry or we'll have the police coming in at all the doors and windows.'

Efrén took no notice, but gave me the guitar again and said, 'Go on, try it!'

It was impossible. I suspected that it was going to be more difficult to learn Efrén's 'simple' variations, and make them sound well, than it had been to learn all the complicated ones from the Spaniards in London. With complexity it is always possible to disguise a little.

'Efrén, vámonos, hombre, por Dios!' Even under the combined attack of Aurelio, Jesús, Rosiana and El Peste, Efrén managed to slip in yet another variation, one that he had invented himself.

On the way back to the bar, Efrén walked ahead and shouted back

to me how much his guitar was worth.

'Four thousand pesetas and a bit!' He repeated the phrase with great emphasis. 'Cuatro mil pesetas Y PICO!'

This came to about twenty-five pounds, at the current rate of a hundred and sixty pesetas to the pound. But even calculating, as I always found it safer to do, at a hundred pesetas to the pound it still only came to forty to fifty pounds, depending on what 'y pico' was. I have heard of Santos guitars selling in London at two hundred to four hundred pounds.

At the Bar Europeo we all sat round a table outside and Efrén agreed to teach me.

'We'll start tomorrow,' he said. He wrote his address on the back of Rosiana's visiting card. While we sat talking, a passing bootblack said something about 'English robbers' out of the side of his mouth. Rosiana leapt to his feet as if, despite his small size and smaller strength, he wanted to start a fight then and there. Aurelio, eye wide open, waved him down; Efrén grabbed one arm, Jesús reached up and grabbed the other.

'Sit down! Ignore it! He's drunk!'

'Siéntate, hombre!'

'Cálmate, niño!'

His honour satisfied, Rosiana sat down, looking indignantly round at each of us. The bootblack slouched away. Aurelio, arm raised, called after him: 'Oiga, Señor! Come back a moment, we want to talk to you!'

The silent figure vanished into the darkness.

Everybody then 'hiciéron muécas'—made faces. But 'muécas' is a specifically Andaluz face. It involves shrugging, drawing back the head, knitting the brows, protruding the tongue and almost crossing the eyes, all at once and in the flash of a second. It is the most vigorous expression of contempt and dismissal I have ever seen anywhere in the world.

Antonio, the stout elderly man in a Cordobés hat who had arrived with Aurelio and had hardly said a word all evening, rose to leave. Leaning on an old-fashioned stick with a curved handle, he asked Aurelio and myself to walk with him to the corner.

The convention of the 'paseo' in Cádiz is a very pleasant one. While talking of trivialities you stroll along—arm in arm if the weather is cold, or the Atlantic wind blowing through the narrow streets. Then, when something important comes up, you stop and discuss it until the subject is settled or exhausted. Then you move on again, perhaps another fifty yards or so, when another debatable point is sure to arise.

It took us all of ten minutes to cover the fifty yards to the corner of

the Calle San Francisco. There, Antonio turned to me and said: 'Aurelio is a genius, and when he dies the art of singing' ('la ciencia del cante'—by which he meant something close to 'the science of flamenco singing') 'as it was understood once in Cádiz will come to an end. His art is extraordinary. He is a phenomenon. No one today has the duendes* he is able to call up—he gestured with his hands, looking about him as though phantoms were already flitting round us in the night air—'nobody at all. The shivers down the spine, the hair that stands on end on the back of your hand, no singers can make that happen today, they don't even know that such things existed, or that that was what el cante was for. Mark my words well, the summoning of spirits requires great knowledge and much art; you can't do it just by shouting. And the young now get film contracts before they can even keep time (saben los compás). When Aurelio dies the art in these parts will be buried with him for ever.'

When we got back, Efrén was arguing with the others in his hoarse voice. It was about Pilar López, whom he said was the best dancer.* It became so violent and the altercation so rapid that I soon lost track of what was going on.

Jesús turned to me and laughed.

'There you are, you see! Artists!'

When I left, Aurelio got up and accompanied me along the street.

'So you will learn from Efrén, that's arranged. At least he'll teach you compás (timing) and the proper tones' (he meant, I imagine, the chord-changes), 'which is more than the others will do.'

He wrinkled his face, scratching at his cheek with curved forefinger. The ruby ring flashed in the light of a street-lamp.

'There's nobody else,' he went on. 'They'll teach you all wrong. All wrong. You want to learn to accompany singing, verdad?' He raised his hands and then squeezed my cheek, chuckling.

'How much are the classes?' I asked.

'How much? Nothing! No, Señor! It's an honour!' Aurelio said.

Efrén came up.

'How much? Nothing! Nothing! Ni hablar!' said Efrén.

Arm in arm, they turned away.

The next morning, a day of grey and surly weather, I went to Efrén's home. He lived in the famous Barrio de Santa María, in a ramshackle tumbledown tenement of the kind called 'vecindad', near the market and church of 'La Mercéd'—'The Grace'.

Its blank wall rose high from a sloping rough-cobbled alley, and at one end was the entrance, cavernous and stinking, which led through to

the courtyard.

Inside the entrance, on the left, was an open lavatory whose blue porcelain bowl was brimful with ordure. Half a dozen tiny square birdcages, made of wood and wire, containing bullfinches, larks and canaries, were fixed to the walls, and the place buzzed with enormous bluebottles and flies that hurled themselves about in the darkness.

I held my breath until I had reached the courtyard inside. Here, where everything was the colour of bleached bone and dust, three storeys of balconies ran round three sides, and the fourth side, next to the entrance, was a high wall of brick and cracked plaster. In the corner facing the entrance there rose a cumbrous staircase made of heavy beams of black wood. This led to the balconies, and these, protected by rusty iron railings, led to the rows of half-doors of the dwellings of the vecinos.

Drizzle began to descend from the glaring, humid sky. Two women and some children stood in the middle of the courtyard. I asked them where Efrén lived.

'Up there!' They pointed to the top storey, to the corner high above the entrance I had just come in by.

One of the women bowed me toward the stairs, her hand, held flat, sweeping in a courtly gesture of invitation.

The steps were slimy and slippery, and several had collapsed and split right through. Moreover, it was necessary to climb this way and that over squatting children. On the first floor a group of women stood round an iron and brick stove on which frying-pans and cauldrons were cooking potatoes. Fumes of hot oil rose in a rush of blue smoke, the stench and heat making my eyes water.

The women all turned and smiled, pointing skyward.

'Go on up! Go up! Efrén's up there!'

I reached the top floor and went round three sides of the building to Efrén's room. Children were everywhere, shouting and blocking the way.

Stacked along the balcony, fixed to the iron railings and hanging on the walls, were dozens upon dozens of birdcages, some empty and others containing larks and brightly coloured bullfinches. The small cages held one bird each, which had just about room to move. The larger held three or more, up to nearly a dozen. At a workbench strewn with shavings, coils of wire, strips of wood and tins of glue, a grey-haired man with a receding forehead and leathery face worked grimly and sullenly with pliers at half a cage.

Outside Efrén's dwelling three children were screaming and two women were trying to quiet them. A huge dirty grey dog was barking

through the railings and a hen was flapping and clucking. What it was doing up there, I couldn't imagine. When I shouted for Efrén above the din, one of the women banged on his door. The upper half opened and a thin, worried-looking woman, her hair pulled straight back to a little bun, leaned out.

'He wants Efrén!' shouted someone.

She nodded, put her two hands together flat against her cheek and tilted her head. He was asleep. She undid the lower half of the door, or gate, and came out, drying her hands on her apron.

'He's asleep,' she said. 'He was working late last night at a juerga.' She cocked her thumb toward her open mouth. Then she shook her head and flipped her hand, like schoolboys do when they want to express something terrific. 'Very drunk! You can't wake him now.'

She said something else which was drowned in a renewed outburst of yelling from the children. One of the women holding a struggling child by both its arms gave me a broad grin.

'Efrén's wife!' she shouted.

Efrén's wife looked at the children, then at me very seriously, and shook her head slowly. We said goodbye politely and I turned to leave. I noticed one little boy, about three years old, naked except for a vest, playing by himself. His legs and stomach were covered all over with flaring red bites.

That afternoon, the sun having come out, I went for a walk. On reaching the point where the Calle Sagasta opened on to the promenade overlooking the sea, I saw Aurelio walking slowly by himself. He had an impressive buff trilby on this time, and a smart suit of the same colour. He raised his hand in welcome and took my arm in his.

As we strolled, breathing in the Atlantic air, I said, 'Look, Aurelio, I can't go to Efrén's house——'

'I don't blame you. Neither can I!'

'Wait a minute. What I mean is, I can't go to Efrén's house dressed like this and expect to get free lessons.'

'He lives that way because he likes it. You don't understand bohemians. Don't pay him anything. I'll see he gets down to some work.'

We went along the promenade—called El Paseo del Sur or South Walk—as far as the Cathedral.

Aurelio took me on a brief tour of what was left of the medieval city—a few whitewashed low arches and walls. He told me how everything visible from the point where we stood had been burned—the fire had lasted a week—by 'los Ingleses' (Essex and Howard), and how

every man, woman, child, baby, dog, cat or rat had been slaughtered. In the Cathedral Square he showed me another survivor of the holocaust, the Arco de la Rosa. Its name recurs constantly in the world of the flamencos: it is eulogized and sentimentalized in many Gaditanian songs, numerous singers have named themselves after it ('Niño de la Rosa'), and the Alegrías for dancing is called (according to Aurelio) 'Alegrías por rosa.* Yet even a determined tourist could well miss it altogether unless it were pointed out to him. It is a perfectly plain, extremely slender white arch of pretty proportions, squeezed between two ancient houses in the Cathedral Square. It is the gateway to a narrow passage that loses itself in the maze of the Barrio de Santa María. Beside the arch was the café we had visited the night before.

Pointing at the enormous bulk of the Cathedral, Aurelio said that a temple once stood there, built by 'los paganos'—the pagans. (Cristóbal told me that in fact there were three, one after the other: the Phoenician temple of Moloch, the Greek temple of Cronos and the Roman temple of Saturn. As these were virtually to the same deity, the same temple may simply have been reconverted, or 'rededicated', by the successive occupying powers. He also told me that the name Cádiz came from a Semitic root—'gadir', meaning a fortified place.* There were Agadirs, he said, towns and mountain fortresses, strung across the world from the Atlantic coast to central Russia. The original name of Cádiz—'Ta Gadir'—simply meant the one nearest the setting sun, as in the name of the mythical ancient kingdom of western Andalusia—Tartessos.) 'We used to say,' Cristóbal added, 'that Cádiz was founded on the stones of Atlantis. But then oceanographers have found that the Atlantic shelf off the coast here has been under water for sixty million years, so I think that squashes that! Cádiz, incidentally, shares its longitude, I believe, almost exactly, with the city of Dublin.'

We emerged on to Paseo del Sur once more, this time near the prison, a large, sombre building, rather battered-looking, the colour of yellow sandstone, with rusty iron bars outside the deep-shadowed windows. A swarthy face stared out at us from one of them, eyes screwed up, unsmiling.

Aurelio took me over to examine one of the houses opposite. It was a typical house of the area, flat-topped and with a square turret, but it was faced with stones instead of plaster.

'I have had my eye on that one for years. You see?' He smiled and pointed at the details, squeezing my arm. 'Good foundations, dry, free of rot—I know, I've seen it inside—the woodwork is excellent, the floors sound. What an investment! Take my advice, the advice of one heavy with years and tanned and hardened in the struggle against life, the

most important thing in life is to own your own house. The most splendid present that God can give to man! Nothing else is worth anything compared to that! And that is why I hate the Communists. Communism is having the whole world trampling through your house! Do *you* want the world in your house?'

I agreed that I did not, but said, perhaps rashly, that it was more complicated than that.

'Complicated? What's complicated? Before the war you'd be sitting reading your morning paper in the café, and suddenly a crowd of desgraciados so rough I can hardly describe them would come shouting among the tables and tear your paper out of your hands. "Anda ya, you can't read that! Do you want to die? Read this!" And they'd thrust their own things under your nose. Once they tore the paper from an old man called Don Jaime O'Neill—is that an Irish name, Gerardo?— and they spat in it and rubbed it all over his face! Because he was a Liberal! They were always in processions, shaking their fists and shouting, shouting for heads. "Death to Don This! The head of Don That!" Always shouting for heads! Never a word of charity, of love, of the brotherhood of man. Never a word to the poor. Just death and heads on poles, that's all they wanted.'

Aurelio's words to Efrén must have done some good because, the next day, I got my first lesson. His method of teaching was simple and effective. Without any explanations he made me follow exactly what he did, without the slightest departure from even little details, which, at first hearing, appeared to be accidents. Now, the point about this is that when playing flamenco you are partly improvising and partly not. You may begin a soleá or Alegrías how you like, provided you stick to the compás (a sort of rhythmic unit of twelve beats)* and make it intelligible. You can begin with a falseta, a tremolo or a passage of ragéos (rasgueados—strumming across the strings with fingers or thumb, or both together: their variety is infinite),* and guitarists rarely begin the same piece the same way when they play it several times in an evening. It is this constant variety within a strict framework that is one of the chief sources of pleasure for the aficionados.

Efrén knew I was aware of all this, but he still wanted things done his way, note by note, and for that I am eternally grateful. First, because it was a good way, and second because it provided a beautifully simple foundation on which to build later, and third because his instinct for what was 'flamenco', and what was not, was unerring.

The next day he gave me another lesson. Afterwards, we went down to the Plaza San Juan de Dios, and in a café by the waterfront I bought ourselves a drink. After a lot of silences—at this period I still found

Efrén difficult to talk to—he suddenly asked me to lend him five hundred pesetas. I lent him a hundred. A day or two later he asked for three hundred and I lent him two hundred. I think a waiter must have seen us and told Aurelio, because there was a row next day.

Afterwards Aurelio said to me: 'You mustn't do that! He earns more than you do. He does, you know. What with his fish-stall and his juergas, he makes a living. And you? About two thousand five hundred a month.'

Thus I learned that Efrén and his family had a fish-stall in the market of La Mercéd, which saved them from starvation.

For the next few days there were no more lessons. Efrén either left his home before I arrived or hid himself somewhere while I was asking for him.

One evening, when Aurelio, Rosiana and myself were sitting outside the Bar Europeo, a black car pulled up by the edge of the pavement. Three men climbed out, told the chauffeur to wait, and approached us. Aurelio got up with a 'Hombre! Señores!' and, after exchanging greetings, followed them into the bar.

There was a slight tension on between the bar-keeper and myself. When I had first arrived I had been distressed by a tiny starving kitten, nothing but bones and scraggy fur, hurrying about under the tables, mewling frantically. I asked the bar-keeper to bring a saucer of milk, which he put in front of me on the table. Perhaps something about the way I put the saucer on the floor betrayed my irritation, for the bar-keeper gave me an ugly look. The kitten lapped up the milk in five seconds, and went off again, mewling as desperately as before. I asked for another saucer of milk. Rosiana gave a broad and knowing smile. The bar-keeper came over, holding a towel, and said, 'Eso, que és? (What is this?)'

'The poor animal's starving to death,' I protested.

'Y qué? (So what?)'

'Are you the Society for the Protection of Animals or something?' he asked, before I could answer.

'No, I'm just being English,' I said, getting carried away by emotion.

'Then I suggest you put your tongue in your pocket!' he said, and began flapping angrily at tables with his towel.

'Oiga, hombre, watch yourself!' Rosiana exclaimed, always leaping to my protection.

Just then Aurelio had come in and, saying he too hated to see a suffering animal (although he was in fact 'asesór', or judge, at the Cádiz bullring), told the bar-keeper to put down another saucer of milk. It was weeks before the bar-keeper and I were on speaking terms again.

(I should in fairness, however, recount another incident. I had a class of army officers, and a priest, every morning. Before going in I used to walk along the wall and look over the sea and Bay of Cádiz. One morning I noticed a cat running to and fro along a ramp far below, at the base of the wall. The rising tide was just reaching the top of the ramp, and the cat was obviously trapped. Some children were leaning over and looking down, but they didn't seem particularly concerned. I told the army officers about it. 'Never mind,' the priest said. 'It will die. It is not important.'

'It is important, surely?' I said.

'Yes, of course it is, really,' he said with great seriousness. 'Let's go and see.'

When we got out we saw that the children had fetched a basket and a long piece of string. They had put a fish in the basket and lowered it down to the cat, and now they were pulling the basket, complete with fish and cat, up again with shouts and laughs. The priest gave me a beaming smile.

The Colonel, ushering me back to the classroom, said: 'Está! We told you it wasn't important!')

About five minutes after Aurelio had gone into the bar with the three men he came out again, beckoned me and, when I went in, pushed me towards them. One was a tall, plumpish young man with sleepy eyes. He was Juan Pemán, the son of José-María Pemán, the poet and novelist. José-María Pemán had been voted Spain's most popular writer that year. Although Gerald Brenan refers to him as Franco's chief propagandist, he points out that Pemán was one of the first to revive an interest in Spain in Federico García Lorca. He is, as well, famous for his translations of Shakespeare. He lived in a large and beautiful house in the Plaza San Antonio in Cádiz. My landlady, Señora López, described him as 'muy simpático'.

Juan Pemán introduced himself with a 'How do you do?' in English and returned to his conversation with Aurelio. These two friends were staying with him, and they had just called by to pay their compliments. Perhaps Aurelio would like to come to the house later and see the children? Mind you, it wouldn't be possible to sing at full strength because of the hour.

After a short discussion it was agreed that Rosiana should come too.

'What's he like?' Juan Pemán asked.

'Good. He's all right.'

Aurelio asked if I could go as well. He would like me to see . . .

'Of course.'

The moment they had gone Aurelio became a bundle of energy. He

walked quickly out on to the pavement and looked up and down the square.

'Right, we've got work to do! Where's Efrén?'

No one had seen Efrén for two days. Rosiana ran off in one direction. The bar-keeper sent his son in another. Aurelio sat down at the table outside and fidgeted. He put his hat on, tilted the brim over his eyes, hummed the beginning of a song, leaned forward, grabbed my cheek between bent finger and thumb, squeezed hard, sat back, shouted for a coffee, changed the order to a bicarbonate of soda, looked at his shoes to see if they were clean (they were), took out his gold watch, looked angrily about muttering, 'Where's Efrén?' Sat back again, sighed and then began to stir rapidly the bicarbonate the waiter had brought him.

The bar-keeper's son came back, panting. Efrén wasn't at home. Rosiana came back, raised his hands in despair, shrugged and sat down.

They argued about where Efrén could be. Rosiana took out his handkerchief—still folded exactly into a square—dabbed his nose and mouth, and off he went again.

When he returned this time Efrén was walking hurriedly beside him, his guitar-case in his hand. In the darkness something about the shape of his face and its expression reminded me of a startled and angry stray cat.

'He's broken his guitar!' Rosiana shouted at Aurelio. 'Would you believe it? He's smashed his guitar to pieces!'

We followed Efrén into the bar. He put the case on to a table and opened it. Inside, what had been a beautiful Santos Hernández was a heap of splintered and broken wreckage. The front had caved in, the neck was torn from its position, the strings were tangled and coiled.

'What have you done?' shouted Aurelio. It was more a cry of disbelief than a question.

'Well, I couldn't help it,' Efrén said defensively. He strutted about the café, keeping well clear of the evidence of his crime. Slapping a duro coin on the bar, he said: 'Give me a *coñac*. Ah, Gerardo, I didn't see you. Gerardo, would you like a drink?'

'No you don't!' Aurelio spun round, glaring at Efrén with blazing eye. 'A drink! That's the cause of all this, isn't it? And your poor woman and your children without decent clothes to cover their backs! Haven't you any shame at all? Everything gone on *borracheras*! Ruined! Look at you!'

Aurelio moved forward and flicked at Efrén's jacket in disgust.

'Look at you! Unshaven! Filth all over your jacket—*hombre*, what's this?' There was alarm in Aurelio's voice. 'There's blood on your coat, and on your face too. Have you been fighting?'

Efrén turned away without answering and shouted for his two *coñacs*.

'There's no time for that now,' Aurelio said angrily. 'Twenty-four crowned devils, man, we're late! Go and get your guitar. Haven't you had enough *borrachera* already?'

Efrén ignored Aurelio and told the bar-keeper's son to run and get his second guitar from his house.

Aurelio and Rosiana continued their indignant protests. 'For God's sake, go and get cleaned up! The man's incorrigible! What can you do with him? Efrén, *stop drinking*! Look at that guitar! What a tragedy! Who knows what it will cost to repair? If it's possible. Ay, if it's possible!'

The two *coñacs* were put on the bar. Efrén pushed mine over to me and said—though I could see that taking no notice of the others was costing him some effort—'There you are, Gerardo. *Salúd!*'

Aurelio and Rosiana stopped protesting, and we all sat down again outside.

Efrén explained that he had been drunk two nights before and, staggering home, had fallen on top of his guitar in the street. Realizing what he had done, he had been overcome by rage and grief and had bitten himself in the arm so violently that he had broken two of his front teeth. He opened his mouth to show me. There was a gap in the middle of his bottom teeth. He took hold of his middle top tooth and waggled it back and forth.

'Look,' he said, 'it's quite loose.' He showed me the tear in his coatsleeve, and said that the bruise underneath hurt so much he could hardly move his arm.

The guitar arrived and we trooped across the pavement to get a taxi.

As Aurelio, Rosiana and myself squeezed into the back, Aurelio said: 'What a fall from the courtesy of the past! It used to be that on occasions like this a car would be sent to await us without a word being spoken. Now we have to do everything ourselves. I don't know—the times we live in—I'm bored. Bored with the times, I am!'

While we sped through the dark and narrow streets—the walls and doorways whizzing by, inches from either side—Aurelio returned to his attack on Efrén and his improvidence. Why hadn't he put the guitar in its case and left it at the *venta* (inn) where the *juerga** had been? But to carry it through the streets . . .

Efrén said that he couldn't find the case at the time. Besides, he didn't want to repeat what had happened before. He turned in his seat and spoke to me confidentially. Aurelio listened, his expression of contempt gradually turning into a smile as the tale unfolded.

'I gave it to the barman and said "Keep it for me" and when I woke

up next morning I couldn't remember where I'd left it. I asked everywhere. I went two weeks with no guitar and no work. No, no one had seen me that night. I went to the police, and in the end they found it in Medina, right up in the mountains. Who'd ever believe it? How do you think it got there, Aurelio?

Aurelio was just forming a venomous and sarcastic reply when the car stopped. We got out and knocked at a huge door. The Plaza de San Antonio is in the expensive part of the town, and in the moonlight looked magically picturesque.

The flamencos talked in whispers, as people always seem to do at the doors of great houses.

'Why don't they answer?'

'Wait a minute!'

'Efrén, you look horrible!'

'Shh! Somebody's coming!'

A maid opened the door and let us into a dark and lofty hall or patio—I cannot remember which—with a wide marble staircase directly before us sweeping up to the first floor. While we stood and answered the greetings of our hosts, a woman's voice called from above.

'Aurelio, come and see the children.'

Aurelio looked up, his eye glinting in the dark, his mouth open with pleasure. 'Ah!' He looked round for somewhere to put his hat and gave it to me, as though the matter was too urgent to bother with formalities. Then he fairly bounded up the stairs, his hand stretched out in front of him along the broad marble top of the banisters. We others, not enjoying the privilege of this special relationship, were ushered into the library. The maid came up and took the hat from my hand.

The library was a long and narrow room, in which most of the wall-space was covered from floor to ceiling with books. There was a grand piano at one end, and along one wall a sofa, on which a lady, whom I imagined to be Señora Pemán, sat with magnificent dignity between two children—a boy and a girl—who were still young enough to be full of excitement about everything. She rose, greeted Efrén and asked after his family. If she noticed his bloodstained, grimy and unshaven appearance, she gave no sign. He answered her polite questions with an expression of wonderful innocence, looking up at her and liping through his broken teeth.

We were given cañas* of manzanilla, and introduced to Juan Pemán's two friends. One was about forty-five, and wore a dark blue suit. He had a pale complexion, a high forehead, slender, sensitive hands, and talked in a quiet, donnish way. The other was younger, with a crew-cut, and wore a buff-coloured suit. He had a boyish grin that was faintly malicious.

'Ah, Gerald,' he said to me, 'you have come all the way from London to play for us, I see.'

Aurelio came in glowing with benevolent satisfaction and we all sat down, Juan Pemán, his family and friends along one side of the room, ourselves on the other. The two children wriggled and rubbed their legs. The great moment was near at hand. Efrén unpacked his guitar and began tuning it.

'Is this room all right to sing in?' Pemán asked Aurelio.

Aurelio, who was undoing his tie in preparation for the exertions soon to be demanded of him, looked round and said it was 'magnificent'.

The beginning of a juerga is always tense with expectation. It is like embarking on an adventure, like driving an old and familiar vehicle on a journey into the unknown. The songs, the drinks, the food, the distinctions of class and professional status, the ritual of the juerga, are all known and familiar. Unknown are the performances the artists will give—the emotions they are going to stir up, and the money they are going to be paid for coming to the houses of the rich to howl out their woes in the middle of the night! The twangings and discords of tuning gradually turn into harmony. The rhythm finds itself and gathers momentum. The first variations are perfunctorily played, almost as try-outs, and the ragéo becomes a little louder and more insistent until the rhythm fills the room; the flamencos begin to snap their fingers and rap their knuckles on table-tops and chairs; the tocaor makes another run of falsetas, more complicated and played with more ease and awareness of art than the first, and then the way is cleared for the singer. Everyone leans forward a little, waiting.

'Efrén—eso quiero!' Aurelio encouraged Efrén in a rasping voice.

Efrén, who sat in an alcove surrounded on three sides by bookcases, was gazing up at the books while he played, as though fascinated by them. Aurelio sang the 'Temple' (pronounced 'templ-eh', also called 'templa'o' or 'salí'a'), a sort of vocal tuning-up that introduces flamenco songs,* and followed without more ado with his 'Cantiña'.

His voice, by no means beautiful according to our conventions, was what the flamencos call 'cantadora' or 'machuna': harsh, rough, rich, perfectly in tune when he wanted it to be, and occasionally thunderous. Aurelio is said to be the lonely survivor of the great school of cante jondo singers which flourished in Cádiz fifty years ago and had as its leaders Enrique 'El Mellizo' (The Twin) and 'Hermosilla' (Little Beauty—so called because he was ugly and large). If that is true, then the theory that art gets more sophisticated with time does not hold good. To judge by Aurelio, the flamenco of that time was more advanced,

more formal, more complex, and more difficult to learn, than the flamenco of today. But perhaps this does not take into account Aurelio's own contribution. He has an absolute control and understanding of what he is doing; the form of each song is revealed in its stark simplicity, and yet he carries the rhythm of the words across the rhythm of the music in a way that generates tremendous emotion. In short, his art appears simple but cannot be imitated. When he forces the notes harder and harder to 'crown the song' (the flamencos say 'coronar los tercios'—crown the *parts*), we the listeners are lifted by a sense of tragedy and heroic beauty that has in it, as well, something which is black, evil and inhuman.

Aurelio's friend Antonio spoke of 'duendes' (demons) and of the prickling of the hair on the backs of our hands. He was describing, obviously, the uncanny sensation caused by the harsh, electrifying quality of Aurelio's voice, by his control, understanding and passion, and also perhaps—as is the case with singers like Antonio Mairena* and Pastora Pavón*—the feeling that Aurelio, for short and inspired moments, was singing not with his own voice but with the voice of his class, of his people, of Spain and of the entire human race.

When Aurelio finished he gestured towards the ceiling to apologize for not singing louder. They had asked him to keep his voice down in order not to wake those who were sleeping above.

Juan Pemán asked for a 'Tiento'.* Efrén began playing, returning his attention to the books.

'This is the primitive guitar music,' Pemán said, 'from the ports across the bay. It's the fundamental style from which all the toque flamenco developed.'

Efrén, in his trance, was playing louder and louder; so much so that when Aurelio sang his 'Temple' this time he could hardly be heard.

'I'm sure the guitarist is playing too loud,' said the young man with the crew-cut. 'Does anyone else think he is playing too loud? Juan? Señora?'

The Señora nodded. Efrén had abandoned the books and was listening to the conversation. He still went on playing, however, just the same.

'The guitarist is playing too loud,' the young man declared to the general company. 'What's the guitarist's name? Efrén? Can't he play softer, then? What's the matter with him?'

He leaned over and rapped the front of Efrén's guitar with his knuckle. 'Efrén, you're playing too loud. You'll wake the whole square! Keep it quiet, son, keep it quiet.'

Efrén stopped, shook his head like a dog emerging from water, and

began from the very beginning again, so softly as to be almost inaudible.

At length came the time when I had to play. It was Aurelio who brought this about.

'This is somebody whom I love very much (que quiero mucho), and you might find it interesting to listen to what he has learned in London.'

The young man with the crew-cut said in English, 'Mr. Gerald is now going to play for us,' and looked round at the company, laughing. As nobody, except perhaps Pemán, understood what he had said, he found he was laughing by himself. He reached down and rubbed his ankle.

Rosiana said, 'Play a *seguriya*, Gerardo, and I shall sing it.'

Now, I had no proper experience of accompaniment. The little I had served only to show how difficult it was. It was more difficult, although only a matter of playing chords and a few accented notes, than playing quite complicated pieces solo. Then there was Efrén's guitar, which he passed over to me. Its appearance, though irrelevant to its playability, was hardly encouraging. Flamenco guitars have two plates on the front for tapping on, called '*golpeadores*'. For the sake of elegance they are usually white or transparent. Not Efrén's however. His were of a shocking, mottled, coffee-coloured plastic, in the same artificial mother-of-pearl finish that used to be seen on cinema organs. They looked, to use Aurelio's expression, like '*caramel papers*'.* But the serious trouble was that Efrén had substituted a steel fourth string for the usual silk and wire one (a heresy I have never heard of before or since, but for which I have a sneaking admiration), with the result that I had no control whatever. When Rosiana began singing I soon foundered. Efrén shook his head in despair. The *seguriya* dragged to its bumpy conclusion, and Juan Pemán said, 'You'll be all right when you understand *compás*.' He looked at me uncertainly, and repeated: 'You don't know the *compás*. You must learn it. Do you understand what I mean?'

When the recital stopped we all stood round with drinks in our hands and talked. The older of Pemán's friends asked me how I came to be doing such a thing as playing the guitar in Cádiz. My answer couldn't have been satisfactory, for he said that he suspected I was simply making a gesture, a gesture of romantic escapism.

'The very fact that a man is willing to sit down in front of people and play betrays a streak of exhibitionism in his character. For the act is essentially exhibitionist, and perhaps the combining of such an act with the choice of a musical genre that is exotic, very exotic indeed for *you*, is a way of justifying yourself, of overcompensating for your inability, or your lack of desire, shall we say, to compete with the social life of your proper environment.'

Someone asked Aurelio why '*señoritos*'* never became successful

flamenco artists.

'Who said such a thing? They always say el cante is an art of the people, for the people and by the people, and it isn't true and never was. The ones who have understood us best have always been the intellectuals'—Aurelio delivered his opinions with great emphasis, looking in front of him, his hand cutting down through the air like a knife—not the rich say I—he paused and glared round at his audience, his forefinger pointed vertically—not the rich, I say nothing about them, but the intellectuals. Anyway, what of Don José Pérez de Guzmán, aristocrat of Huelva and the most famous fandaguero* that there ever was? Or Don Alfredo Fillol, the aristocrat of Valdepeñas and a guitarist who dominated the accompaniment of "los cantes" and the most difficult falsetas as well as any professional could dominate them? How many professionals looked at him with envy? Poor man! He spent all his fortune on that religion of his, and all he had at the end of his life was a tiny café in Madrid full of mementos—priceless mementos—of the great, on his back one ragged suit winter and summer and on his feet one pair of worn-out shoes whose soles flapped about because he had no money to mend them!

The three listened patiently.

'Perhaps he was aspiring to the condition of the flamencos,' the young man with the crew-cut said with his malicious smile.

'Everybody knows there is purity in the life of the poor,' Aurelio said with impressive dignity. 'That is why artists are born among them. They are professionals who live by their wits and cunning and are always afraid of becoming beggars or being chained in prison, and when you fail, your wife and your children and your mother and father are all in the house with you, and you have nowhere to put your head. And when you succeed you are everybody's hero and there is no one to say he doesn't love you—except your fellow-artists.'

'The proportion of artists born to a given population represents an even distribution throughout that population,' the elder of the two guests said. 'The poor outnumber the rich. Therefore there are more artists born among the poor.'

Outside again in the cool air and moonlight, we crossed the square and walked along the dark cobbled streets in high spirits.

Without looking down, Aurelio stealthily passed something to Rosiana, who snapped it up instantly. It was a banknote.

'Ay!' muttered Rosiana, 'how good!'

They stopped, huddled together, while Aurelio, wetting his thumb, counted out the rest of the money and split it between the other two.

The whole transaction was over in a moment. I stood slightly apart, and when the group broke up Aurelio came slowly over to me, his Al Capone hat pulled down, his face white in the pallid light of the moon, and slipped his hand into my arm.

'Is your father alive, Gerardo? What is his profession?'

'He's a priest,' I said, not knowing the Spanish equivalent of 'clergyman'.

'A priest?' He stopped, pulling back on my arm, as if he was about to burst into astounded laughter.

'Protestant priests are allowed to marry,' I said.

'Are they, indeed?'

'It is believed that the priests should have the same experience of marriage as others, so they can understand better the problems of ordinary people,' I added hastily and, anticipating, I hoped, his thoughts, went on, 'There are other reasons, obviously.'

Aurelio was silent a moment.

'A man has to *follar*,' he said. 'Don't be offended! I'm not speaking disrespectfully. No, I would never wish to offend you. I don't offend you, do I? Obviously your father must be a good man, a very noble man, to have produced such a son, and I expect you love him very much. Do you? But a man has to *follar*.'

He turned to the other two.

'Gerardo's father is a Protestant priest. Not a proper priest, you understand, with a vocation, because they are allowed to marry. But he must be a good man, all the same.' Turning to me he asked: 'Do you see drunken priests in England, in the street? They don't go to whorehouses, do they, I mean, having wives and all? You don't mind my asking this, do you?'

I had to admit that occasionally vicars got drunk, though hardly, if ever, in the street, and occasionally they went to whorehouses with their collars turned backwards.

Just then three figures approached out of the darkness. Two were young men, one short and dark with a moustache, the other short and blond, and they stood on each side, arm in arm, with a taller man, somewhat stout, in a bright blue suit. His face was large, with a double chin, and rather long shiny black hair. His manner was expansive, almost florid, and there was an air of oriental indolence and luxury about his whole appearance. He wore a large red carnation in his buttonhole.

'Buenas tardes, Señores.' He looked down at us like a friendly uncle. 'Aurelio, Rosiana, Efrén.'

I was introduced.

'Porfirio Díaz de los Reyes, at your orders, standing as the Rock of Gibraltar to the British Navy; a beacon in calm weather, a haven of refuge in storm. Manolo Fernández González, on my right, is a medical student; Alfonso Alonso, on my left, is a doctor; I am a'—he waved his hand in contempt—'a nothing.'

'Goo' ni!' said Aurelio. 'That means "good evening", doesn't it? What's that other expression the English always use? Fuckin' 'ell! That's it!'

Porfirio then said something about the great singer Antonio Chacón and Aurelio. I knew that Chacón, because of his high melodious voice and rather round and soft appearance, had been the subject of many jokes about his supposed 'mariconismo' (homosexuality), though I understood they were not based on truth. Catching the tone rather than the meaning of Porfirio's joke, and not wishing to be left in the air, I turned to Aurelio and said, 'These are your *friends*?'

Everybody exploded into a shout of laughter and, as Spaniards do when they laugh, ran off in different directions, bent double. The laughter echoed down the cobbled street. The effect was clearly far more powerful than I had intended, and I am not sure to this day whether Porfirio was really as amused as all that.

They went on their way. At my door I said good night to Aurelio, Rosiana and Efrén.

'Efrén, I shall pay for my lessons from you. I insist. After all, it's only fair. What would the price be?'

'What do you think, Aurelio?' Efrén asked. 'What should I charge for that?'

'Why not start at a hundred pesetas a month? And afterwards . . .'

We agreed on that, and they went off down the street. Just as I opened the door, I heard Efrén's voice.

'Gerardo!'

He came running back. 'Coming to the bulls tomorrow at San Fernando? It's a holiday tomorrow, eh? Come with us! Aurelio will be there.'

Rosiana and Aurelio returned through the darkness.

'You'll like it, it's very pretty,' Rosiana said. 'It's a festival fight. They don't wear the suits of lights, just the country suit and hats. Very pretty.'

'Until tomorrow, then,' Efrén said.

'God willing,' Aurelio said. 'Don't forget to say "God willing". One should never forget to say "God willing".' Then he waved and said in his English, 'Goo' ni!'

When I met Efrén the next afternoon I was ten minutes late and he was furiously impatient. I was still undeceived of the universal myth of

Spanish unpunctuality. Reasoning, on the one hand, that Gaditanos were the quintessence of Andaluces, and therefore would be more Andaluz than anyone else, and on the other that flamencos were the quintessence of the popular conception of Spaniards, and would be more procrastinating than anyone else, I assumed that Gaditanian flamencos would have no idea of time at all. I was completely wrong. Aurelio, Efrén, Rosiana, Chaqueta, Pericón de Cádiz, Manolo Vargas, and all the other flamencos, were more *punctual* in keeping their appointments than I had ever been. They were *never* late, and were always put out by those who were. There is a subtle difference between being *unpunctual* and *not turning up at all*.

Efrén said we should go not by bus but by train.

We practically ran to the station, stood fuming in a queue for tickets, climbed aboard and stood on the plates between two coaches. While we were rolling cigarettes, three hawk-faced gypsies climbed up and stared at us, their eyes as reassuring as hungry cats'.

'Que vámo' a lo' toro', te va'?' they said to Efrén. (We're going to the bulls, you coming?)

'I'm going with my friend,' he said, pointing at me with his thumb.

The train was made of wood inside and out, yellow wood covered with old varnish. The seats were little more than simple planks with backs almost at right angles to them. We sat down, and Efrén pulled out a crumpled children's comic and began to read. As we clanked slowly out of the station a small boy jumped aboard and stood in the doorway of the coach looking round at us all. He wore a white shirt—reasonably clean—long tattered trousers and his bare feet were grey with dust. Supporting himself by gripping the sides of the doorway, he began to sing in a high reedy voice, scarcely audible above the noise of the train and the harsh jabber of Iberian conversation. He closed his eyes in concentration and rocked to and fro with the effort of controlling his breath. On and on went the melody, up and down, up and down, becoming more and more clear as it rose to its climax. He raised his left hand, open, and held it trembling beside his face, until at last his melancholy tune swooped down to its finish. He opened his eyes, panting with exhaustion, his face red, and then walked down the aisle, holding out a little tin which he pulled from his pocket.

'Por mi madre, Señores . . . por el arte, Caballeros. (For my mother, Señores . . . for the art, Gentlemen.)'

Here and there the soft clink of a diminutive alloy coin placed in his tin showed that his stolen trip was not entirely fruitless, but Efrén seemed unaware of his presence until I gave the boy a peseta. Efrén looked at me as if I were something past praying for, and returned to

reading his comic.

As the train slowed down outside San Fernando Station I saw the boy on all fours on the ground below. He had presumably leapt off and fallen over.

We found Aurelio sitting at a café table in the middle of dozens of other tables, all crowded, on a wide area of pavement. He was drinking a bicarbonate of soda. With him was a tubby young man in a smart navy-blue suit and with smooth black hair brilliantined back. His face was largely concealed behind an enormous pair of sunglasses. As we walked to the Plaza de Toros, he told me his name—Alvaro de la Isla (Alvaro of the Island)*—his profession—cantaor—and that he knew another Englishman who played the guitar, called El Niño de California.

'An American?'

'Pues, sí.'

'Is he good?'

'Oh, very good indeed, very, very good.'

To my shame I felt a pang of jealousy.

The bullring at San Fernando is small, appears quite ancient, and the outside walls are terracotta pink. I am no expert on bullfighting, having seen hardly a dozen corridas (they are rather expensive), and so I can make no knowledgeable comments about it. Besides this, my feelings are mixed. The Corrida Festival is a corrida held after the season is over, and the proceeds are given to charity. The toreros wear grey Andaluz suits and Cordobés hats. The atmosphere is more informal and friendly than during a proper corrida, and the most famous matadors usually take part. That afternoon, for instance, there were Rafael Ortega and Dominguín. This was going to be Dominguín's last, positively last, public appearance. The veteran Domingo Ortega was also booked, but he didn't appear.

Efrén and I sat on the stone seats fairly high up. Below us, Aurelio and his friends took places in the barrera (front). He looked round, saw us, stood up and raised his hat as if to a funeral, calling out in English: 'Goo' ni'! Goo' ni'! Fuckin' 'ell!' Then he sat down again and lit a cigar. There was a crowd of gypsies—the three we had seen on the train among them—by the gate, waiting to climb up and look over. How do gypsies manage to get into everything worth seeing for nothing? One of them was a cripple I knew to be a dancer called Farinas.

The sun was hidden by high cloud; the afternoon was cool and pearly grey. Every time a bull raced like a heavy black projectile from the darkness into the arena, Efrén, bent forward with attention, would say 'Good!' and tell me why, or 'Bad!' and sit back and roll a cigarette.

I remember one breathtaking moment when Dominguín sat on his

knees and, as the bull thundered past—it seemed to go over him—he swung the cape back and high over his head: there was a momentary explosion of pink spreading out in beautiful convolutions and butterfly shapes before the cape floated to the sand. The bravest bull was one with a deformed, curling right horn. He charged with a sort of stolid, inexhaustible courage, always straight and without hesitation, as though he were consciously playing his doomed part to make the spectacle heroic. There was loud applause as his carcass was dragged off. But I have never been able to overcome my horror and pity at the moment when a bull stands there, bewildered, miserable and defeated, the hilt of the sword against its shoulders, the point sticking out below its belly, retching and jerking while blood pours like water from a tap out of its mouth, nostrils and anus, before it keels over on to the ground, its legs stiff in the air.

Just before Dominguín fought his second bull he came over to Aurelio and said, 'Aurelio, I want to dedicate the last bull of my life to you, in gratitude for the soleares you will sing at my fiesta tonight.'

After the fight Aurelio met us outside and gave Efrén a piece of paper with the phone number on it. There was to be a fiesta at a cortijo (country house) nearby: Dominguín would be there, with his beautiful Italian wife Lucia Bose the film-star, Rafael Ortega, various local dignitaries, an 'English poet' and, it was believed, Ava Gardner.

'Ring me at nine o'clock, and I shall tell you where to come,' he said. 'Be sure he does, Gerardo.'

Efrén, Alvaro and myself wandered to the main square, in front of the Town Hall. Sitting at a table outside a café—it was getting dark—was a little man in a mackintosh and trilby. His face was covered with the pits of small-pox, and he had rather a large, music-hall, nose. He got up when he saw Efrén, who embraced him and kissed him on both cheeks.

'This is Paquiqui,' Efrén said, 'muy buena persona.'

In the bar we were joined by Antonio, Niño de la Rosa (named after the Arco de la Rosa in Cádiz), a tall, thin and pale young man.

The argument which began continued, on and off, right through the night till dawn. It was provoked in the first place by Alvaro. He had been learning the guitar as an additional skill to his flamenco singing. He had been taught bits by Niño Ricardo and others, and his progress had been rapid. This made him, he claimed, the leading flamenco of Spain, and, if you looked at the matter in the proper light, the best guitarist. For other tocaóres were tocaóres pure and simple, whereas he was a singer and a famous one to boot. (He had, indeed, made quite a number of records.) Now, if we considered these two accomplishments,

not separately but rather as a whole, the potentiality for greatness here would seem to be unlimited. Within one year, as a result of his knowledge as a cantaor, he had managed to master more than other guitarists had mastered in five. Surely, therefore, instead of subtracting one talent from the other, one should add them together, counting his years as a singer rather as a handicap of a fast runner is counted, that is, in his favour. Who, therefore, was to there deny . . . ?

At first, Efrén, confronted by these claims to genius and greatness, merely looked round grinning, and said 'Ojú!' (Jesus). Later, goaded and defensive, he began to argue.

'Never say an artist of merit is bad, or a style is bad,' he said. 'Say I don't like it, but don't say it is bad. You don't know.'

Everybody agreed that that was well said.

'I'll tell you something,' Efrén said. 'I am as good an artist, as good a guitarist, as you are a singer. Now, what can you say to that?'

'Olé!' Paquiqui shouted, and poured wine into Efrén's glass from a bottle.

(There was nothing for it but to settle the argument by demonstration.) Alvaro went home to fetch his guitar, and things quieted down for a while. It was nine o'clock. I reminded Efrén of his appointment to phone Aurelio.

'Yes, we mustn't miss that,' he said, 'but we need Alvaro's guitar.'

Alvaro returned and Efrén, instead of phoning Aurelio, phoned for a taxi. When it arrived we all piled in and drove to the outskirts of the town, over a bridge, and stopped by a venta (inn) called 'La Venta Inesperada'—The Unexpected Inn. As we got out, Paquiqui told the driver to go and fetch Capinetti.

It was rather like an enormous canteen inside. At one end was a semicircular bar and an army-type stove with a pipe going up through the roof. In the rest of the room were rows of long wooden tables, with benches to sit on. The room—or dining-hall—was empty of people except for the barman, who put some bottles and glasses for us on one of the tables.

The juerga started well. Capinetti arrived with his guitar. He was the nephew of the famous Capinetti who had died six years before in poverty, and was a small quiet man who worked as a carpenter by day. Alvaro sang: he had a fine voice. Niño Rosa danced and later sang. Efrén played with possessed fury. The dispute looked like being forgotten until Alvaro started his bullfighting act. He stood, while singing, making torero passes with an imaginary cape. Flamenco has a way of passing from the serious to the pompously theatrical, and then to the childish and absurd, and thence back again to the serious. No one

seems to mind too much, but for a foreigner it can be a tedious experience. Alvaro then demonstrated his prowess with the guitar—his skill was reasonable—in the style of Niño Ricardo, but his knowledge was fragmentary—until Paquiqui rudely told Efrén to start playing again. Alvaro went red in the face and refused to speak to anybody. At length, however, for he was clearly a person who hated to be left out of things, he returned to sing and then asked Efrén in confidence what they were being paid. Efrén told him that as Paquiqui was a lifelong friend, he could hardly ask more than a hundred and fifty pesetas, and would probably settle for fifty. Alvaro said that he would ask for three hundred, being famous. Efrén said he wouldn't get it. Alvaro made Efrén promise not to say anything to Paquiqui, and he would ask for nothing. Efrén promised, and promptly went and told Paquiqui. Paquiqui shouted at Alvaro, who punched Efrén in the face. The others kept Alvaro and Efrén apart until they calmed down. Capinetti and I sat at a table talking while the dispute raged, the hoarse voices echoing in the empty hall.

'What a fiesta!' Capinetti said grimly.

'Capinetti!' shouted Paquiqui. 'Come and do some work! Play a soleá for Antonio.' Capinetti joined them and started playing.

Alvaro was sitting on a bench, his face in his hands. He got up and went over to Paquiqui.

'You completely misunderstand,' he said. 'I never asked for anything. I merely told him that in professional circumstances my fee would be three hundred pesetas, and that filthy, degenerate, treacherous animal . . .' His voice rose hysterically, and he threw himself at Efrén, grabbing him round the throat and squeezing with all his strength. 'I'll kill him! Liar! Chivate! Cabrón!*

Alvaro's guitar, which Efrén was holding, fell to the floor with a resounding 'bong!' and Paquiqui, Capinetti and Antonio leapt once more on the struggling pair. Efrén pulled himself free, fell back against the bar, grabbed a bottle, raised it high to throw at Alvaro and had his wrist seized from behind by the barman.

Just then the door opened at the far end of the hall, and two Civil Guards came in, their green cloaks done up at the neck, their tommy-guns slung from the shoulder.

Efrén let go his bottle, which the barman put down quickly. Alvaro, released, adjusted his tie. There were tears running down his cheeks. Capinetti sat down and started tuning his guitar. Paquiqui picked up the other guitar and gave it to Efrén.

As they passed, the Civil Guards looked at me curiously, and then said to the group, 'Good evening.' Paquiqui offered them tobacco and

papers, and everybody rolled cigarettes.

'We heard a bit of a noise from outside. You shouldn't cause a disturbance, you know. Somebody might complain.'

'It's all right, we're having just a private juerga, all on our own,' Paquiqui said. 'People get a bit excited, you know what artists are. We have an English guest here; a teacher from the English Academy.'

The Civil Guards ordered beans and coffee, and sat down. For half an hour there was peace, while they ate. I played a bit for Capinetti, and Alvaro even hummed a few notes. I asked Efrén, 'What about this fiesta for Dominguin, with Ava Gardner and all the others?'

'There's time enough. No, there isn't, it's too late now,' Efrén said, looking at Paquiqui's watch. Whatever Efrén's faults were, he could hardly be accused of social-climbing or snobbery. I tried to think of anyone I knew in London who wouldn't have fallen over themselves merely to get invited to a party such as that, let alone perform there. Apart from that, he would be earning five times as much playing to Dominguin, Ava Gardner and all those people of consequence, as he would be here.

As soon as the Civil Guards had left, Paquiqui said: 'Come on, everybody! Let's get on with the fiesta. Properly this time. You play, Efrén.'

Efrén put his foot up on the bench and, standing, started to play a 'Bulería'. Paquiqui came forward and hit so hard he nearly knocked Efrén flying.

'Don't play that! No! Play a soleá!'

Efrén regained his balance, cross and surprised, and without a word of protest put his leg up again and began the soleá.

'Oiga! You!' Paquiqui now picked on me. 'You're not drinking! Why don't you say something? Come on, drink! Why doesn't he say anything, Efrén?'

'I'm all right,' I said, and showed him my glass half full.

'Come on, that's not the way!' Paquiqui poured wine into my glass (it was the size of a light-ale glass in England) until it overflowed and poured over my hand. He grabbed my wrist and tried to force it up to my mouth, spilling wine everywhere. He lifted the bottle up and poured it down the front of my suit. Furious, I shoved him away.

He glared at me red-faced, shouted 'Ach!' and turned away in disgust. The music had stopped. Alvaro had gone to attack Efrén again, and Antonio Rosa had intervened. The two were rolling on the floor, punching at each other's faces. A bench fell against a table, and then the table went over with a thunderous echoing crash.

'Stop it! Shut up!' Paquiqui and Capinetti tried to quiet them, but

didn't risk physically interfering. Alvaro's collar burst open. Antonio Rosa was on top of Alvaro. He climbed off him, and dusted down his trousers. Alvaro got up, white and shaking, pulled at his collar, which was standing out, the tie pulled into a tight knot over his shoulder, and cried, 'Look what you've done!' He felt for the stud, found that the stud had been torn off and tried to pull the tie back into place. 'What am I going to do? Me cago en to tu muerto'!* Me cago en la leche de tu pare! (I shit on all your dead! I shit in your father's milk!) Look what you've done!' He gestured hopelessly.

Another pair of Civil Guards came in, just as Efrén and Capinetti were putting the table up again. Wine was spilt all over the floor, bottles and glasses were broken and so were the legs of a chair. Efrén propped the chair against a bench, so that no one would notice. It seemed to have escaped the barman's attention. Efrén gave me a wink.

The Civil Guards saw the broken bottles.

'What's happening here? Can't you have a fiesta without fighting?'

'The Englishman got drunk and fell over the bottles,' Efrén said. 'He has a weak head.'

The Civil Guards looked at my suit, still dark from the wine Paquiqui had poured over it.

'Getting yourself filthy like that shows a lack of self-respect,' one of them said. His patent-leather helmet, with its black wings, and the black strap under his chin and the gun-metal of the slotted barrel of his tommy-gun peeping over his shoulder, gleamed and glinted in the glare of the electric light.

'If you can't drink in a serene fashion, and enjoy your pleasures like a gentleman, you shouldn't drink at all!'

'It's all right, we'll look after him,' Efrén said.

'I'll see he gets home safely,' said Paquiqui, 'he won't cause any more trouble, I swear by my mother.'

'He's an English visitor—a teacher, you understand—and he can't keep up with our capacity,' Efrén said sympathetically, touching his forehead. 'You know, they go to his head. We'll give him some coffee.' He went over to the bar and banged on the counter, 'Oiga, Usted! A coffee for the Englishman.'

The Civil Guard hesitated. 'Very well, but we'll be just over the road.'

They went to the door, where the Guard who had spoken turned and looked at me menacingly. 'Go to bed. You should remember your mother.'

A little while later the venta filled with lorry-drivers and shepherds. They stood drinking coffee and warming their hands by the stove. One of them, in a fleece-lined jacket, asked me where I had come from.

When I said London he said he had read *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *Pickwick* and *Our Mutual Friend*.

'There is a marvelous scene in *Our Mutual Friend* where they are in a boat on the River Tamesis (Thames), looking for bodies and salvage, the brutal old man, and his little daughter rowing the boat—I wept when I read that. A very great writer. And then the man with the wooden leg who was a dung-merchant—human dung from the cities, verdad?—and he prods the dunghill with his wooden leg—ay, what a detail! He always reminded me of Cervantes, such compassion and humour! Would you agree, as I have always believed, that Dickens is the English Cervantes?'

This pleasant conversation was interrupted by Efrén, who said a taxi was waiting outside to take me to Cádiz.

'A taxi? Who ordered it?'

'Paquiqui. It'll take you home in no time.'

'What is the time, while . . .'

'Five o'clock on the dot. Come on, Gerardo, it's waiting.'

I went out and got into the taxi.

'Who's paying for this?' I asked the driver.

'I don't know.'

'Efrén!' I shouted, and when he came out I said, 'I thought Paquiqui was paying for this.'

'Yes, that's right,' Efrén said to the driver.

'Not that I know of,' said the driver.

'It's all arranged,' Efrén said.

I climbed out on the far side from Efrén and walked quickly along the road into the darkness. Efrén's voice, muffled by the silence of the countryside, came from behind calling my name.

I walked for about quarter of an hour through pitch blackness, until I saw the lights of the square and main street of San Fernando ahead. Some labourers, carrying lanterns and pickaxes, passed, and I asked them if there was a bus to Cádiz at any time.

'From the square in ten minutes,' they said. One held his hands up, fingers splayed, and repeated: 'Ten minutes. It's for workmen.'

'Can I go on it?'

'Sí, hombre.'

When I got off the bus in Cádiz I saw Aurelio sitting by himself at a café table outside the Bar Europeo. The square was deserted. The sun was rising behind the mountains and the air was silent and still. Aurelio threw up both arms when he saw me.

'Where've you been? Where on earth have you been? I was waiting for hours, in fact all night. What happened?'

I told him what had happened.

'That's it, then. I shall have to get a proper guitarist. That's what happens if you go out with Efrén. Didn't I tell you he was muy sinvergüenza? Muy, muy sinvergüenza? Did you lend him any money?'

'No. Were you able to sing?'

'Of course I wasn't able to sing! Everybody was most polite and agreeable, wondering what had happened, but . . . I'll kill Efrén. You see when I catch him!'

After a little desultory conversation, apropos of what I forget, I asked Aurelio if he ever listened to flamenco on the radio.

'Flamenco on the radio? What for? What is there to listen to? After Chacón and El Mellizo and Manuel Torres of Jerez, and they are all dead? I am bored, Gerardo, bored. After hearing such beautiful things, that would make you cry as though your mother had died?'

He repeated the question, glaring at me.

'Después de escuchar a cosa tan buena?' (After hearing such beautiful things?)

He sat silent, and then said:

'No, I don't listen to flamenco.'

I had been itching to ask him about Ava Gardner, Dominguín and his wife Lucia Bose but I felt it would be turning the knife in the wound just a bit too much. Anyway, it seemed unimportant now.

'You must admit, Aurelio,' I said, 'that the juerga we had was—by all accounts of such things—truly flamenco—era una juerga verdaderamente flamenca.'

Aurelio raised his eye to heaven.