

THE SECRET LIFE
OF SALVADOR DALI

BY

Salvador Dalí

TRANSLATED BY HAAKON M. CHEVALIER

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uneducated people," they said, "who never stop chewing their gum while they ask you endless indiscreet questions." Everyone had invented private tricks for evading them, but beneath this puerile hypocrisy, it was very easy to see that everyone desired and thought of only one thing—the opportunity to be interviewed. Only they defended themselves in advance against possible disappointment by the well-known reaction of "not wanting it"—because the "grapes were too sour." I, however, affected the opposite position, and often said, "I love getting publicity, and if I am lucky enough to have the reporters know who I am, I will give them some of my own bread to eat, just as Saint Francis did with his birds." My shamelessness in this regard struck everyone as in such bad taste that they could not help twisting their mouths into a suggestion of a sneer.

"What do you think I can do to have my bread make the greatest impression on the reporters?" I would unsparingly ask all my acquaintances on the ship. I decided in the end to change its cellophane envelope for another made of simple newspaper tied with strings in the middle and leaving both ends sticking out: I wanted the fact that it was really a loaf of bread to be unmistakable, and I would be able to unwrap it myself before everyone's eyes.

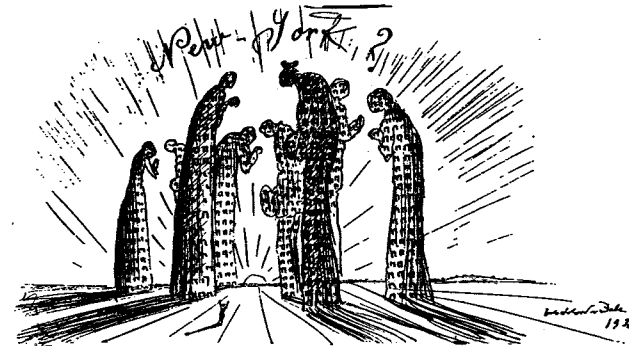
We reached New York, and while we were going through the formalities of having our visas checked for the landing I got word that the reporters wanted to talk to me. I ran to my cabin to fetch my loaf of bread, and appeared in another cabin where a group of reporters were waiting for me.

Then there happened to me an utterly disconcerting thing, and I felt as Diogenes, that king of the cynics, would have felt if on the day when he went forth naked with a tub around his middle and a lighted candle in his hand he had met no one in his way who would ask him, "What are you looking for?" It may appear astonishing, but it is a fact that not one of the reporters asked me a single question about the loaf of bread which I held conspicuously during the whole interview either in my arm or resting on the ground as though it had been a large cane.

On the other hand, all these reporters were amazingly well informed as to who I was. Not only this. They knew stupefying details about my life. They immediately asked me if it was true that I had just painted a portrait of my wife with a pair of fried chops balanced on her shoulder. I answered yes, except that they were not fried, but raw. Why raw? they immediately asked me. I told them that it was because my wife was raw too. But why the chops together with your wife? I answered that I liked my wife, and that I liked chops, and that I saw no reason why I should not paint them together.

These reporters were unquestionably far superior to European reporters. They had an acute sense of "non-sense," and one felt, moreover, that they knew their job dreadfully well. They knew in advance exactly the kind of things that would give them a "story." They had a merciless flair for the sensational which made them pounce immediately upon the

kernel of every question and which enabled them, in the midst of the swarming and indistinguishable confusion, to choose unerringly just the daily events possessing the vitamin content necessary for the journalistic diet that was to nourish the casual curiosity of millions of psychologies in a state of inanition. In Europe reporters start out on their interviews with their finished article already in their pockets, composed in advance on the basis of circumstances and coincidences of all sorts, and addressed to a reader who will read it only in order to judge whether what he is told is exactly what he already knew. Europe has the sense of history, but not that of journalism. The American journalist, on the other hand, starts from a criterion based on instantaneity, in which his all-powerful instinct of biological competition comes first and foremost, enabling him to shoot on the fly those rare and fleeting birds of actuality which he will bring back still warm and bleeding and toss on the desk of his editor-in-chief—a desk covered by the pallor of expectation of the white sheets of paper awaiting news, and by the blackness of the black hope of the news locked up within his black telephone.



The day I arrived in America the reporters returned from their morning hunt and triumphantly tossed into the air a pair of raw chops. Already that evening all New York was eating these chops, and even today in the remote corners of the continent I know that people are still gnawing at the last substance of their bones . . .

I went out on the deck of the *Champlain*, and suddenly I beheld New York. It rose before me, verdigris, pink and creamy-white. It looked like an immense Gothic Roquefort cheese. I love Roquefort, and I exclaimed, "New York salutes me!" But immediately the pride of the Catalonian blood of Christopher Columbus which flows in my veins cried to me, "Present!" and I in turn saluted the cosmic grandeur and the virgin originality of the American flag.

New York, you are an Egypt! But an Egypt turned inside out. For

she erected pyramids of slavery to death, and you erect pyramids of democracy with the vertical organ-pipes of your skyscrapers all meeting at the point of infinity of liberty! New York, granite sentinel facing Asia, resurrection of the Atlantic dream, Atlantis of the subconscious. New York, the stark folly of whose historic wardrobes gnaws away at the earth around the foundations and swells the inverted cupolas of your thousand new religions. What Piranesi invented the ornamental rites of your Roxy Theatre? And what Gustave Moreau apoplectic with Prometheus lighted the venomous colors that flutter at the summit of the Chrysler Building?

New York, your cathedrals sit knitting stockings in the shadow of gigantic banks, stockings and mittens for the Negro quintuplets who will be born in Virginia, stockings and mittens for the swallows, drunk and drenched with Coca-Cola, who have strayed into the dirty kitchens of the Italian quarter and hang over the edge of tables like black Jewish neckties soaked in the rain and waiting for the snappy, sizzling stroke of the iron of the coming elections to make them edible, crisp as a charred slice of bacon.

New York, your beheaded manikins are already asleep, spilling all their "perpetual blood" which flows like the "surgical fountains of publicity" within the display-windows dazzling with electricity, contaminated with "lethargic surrealism." And on Fifth Avenue Harpo Marx has just lighted the fuse that projects from the behinds of a flock of explosive giraffes stuffed with dynamite. They run in all directions, sowing panic and obliging everyone to seek refuge pell-mell within the shops. All the fire-alarms of the city have just been turned on, but it is already too late. Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! I salute you, explosive giraffes of New York, and all you forerunners of the irrational—Mack Sennett, Harry Langdon, and you too, unforgettable Buster Keaton, tragic and delirious like my rotten and mystic donkeys, desert roses of Spain!

I awoke in New York at six in the morning on the seventh story of the Hotel St. Moritz, after a long dream involving eroticism and lions. After I was fully awake I was surprised by the persistence of the lions' roars that I had just heard in my sleep. These roars were mingled with the cries of ducks and other animals more difficult to differentiate. This was followed by almost complete silence. This silence, broken only by roars and savage cries, was so unlike the din I had expected—that of an immense "modern and mechanical" city—that I felt completely lost, and for some time I thought my waking imagination continued to be under the influence of my dream. Nevertheless I had actually heard lions' roars, for the waiter who brought me breakfast, a Canadian who spoke French perfectly, informed me that there was a zoo just across the avenue in Central Park. And when I looked out of my window I could make out the cages, and even the seals splashing in the tank.

But all my experiences during the rest of the day only continued systematically to give the lie to the stereotype of the "modern and mechan-

ical city" which the estheticians of the European advance guard, the apologists of the aseptic beauty of functionalism, had tried to impose upon us as an example of anti-artistic virginity. No, New York was not a modern city. For, having been so at the beginning, before any other city, it now on the contrary already had a horror of this. I began my succession of afternoon cocktail parties at a house on Park Avenue in which fierce anti-modernism manifested itself in the most spectacular fashion, beginning with the very façade. A crew of workers armed with implements projecting black smoke that whistled like apocalyptic dragons were in the act of patining the outer walls of the building in order to "age" this excessively new skyscraper by means of that blackish smoke characteristic of the old houses of Paris. In Paris, on the other hand, the modern architects à la Corbusier were racking their brains to find new and flashy, utterly anti-Parisian materials which would not turn black, so as to imitate the supposed "modern sparkle" of New York. As soon as I entered the elevator I was surprised by the fact that instead of electricity it was lighted by a large candle. On the wall of the elevator there was a copy of a painting by El Greco hung from heavily ornamented Spanish red velvet strips—the velvet was authentic and probably of the fifteenth century. After the smoked façade and the Toledo-chapel elevator I do not think it is necessary to continue with the description of the apartment, of which I shall only tell you in passing that it contained Gothic, Persian, Spanish Renaissance, Dalís and two organs.

The whole rest of the afternoon I visited an unbroken succession of other apartments and hotel rooms. We went from one cocktail party to another; sometimes several occurred in the same building; this gave rise to a complete confusion which my absolute ignorance of the English language made all the more vague and agreeable. But of all the fleeting visions the sole clear impression that remained in my mind was that of New York as a city without electricity. The elevator lighted by a candle was not an isolated case; it was typical. Everywhere the electric light was choked by Louis XVI skirts, by Gothic polychrome parchment manuscripts, by manuscript partitions of Beethoven serving as lampshades. One had the impression that artificial ivy grew in all the corners of the woodwork, and that bats, equally artificial, and invisible, were constantly flitting through the propitious darkness of the halls. In the evening I visited an astonishing motion-picture temple. It was decorated with the most diverse artistic bronzes, from the *Victory of Samothrace* to Carpeaux; with ultra-aneccdotic pictures really painted in oil, framed with an oppressive fantasy of gold molding; and in the midst of all this one suddenly perceived the plumes of a playing fountain illuminated with the whole iridescent rainbow of bad taste. And again, organs—organs everywhere, organs and organs, more and more monumental.

That evening before going to bed I took a last Scotch and soda at the bar of the Hotel St. Moritz in the company of a very ceremonious Quaker in a top hat whom I had met discreetly dissipating in a sordid

New York is that of a giant many-piped organ of red ivory—it does not scrape the sky, it resounds in it, and it resounds in it with the compass of the systole and the diastole of the visceral canticles of elementary biology. New York is not prismatic; New York is not white. New York is all round; New York is vivid red. New York is a round pyramid. New York is a ball of flesh a little pointed toward the top, a ball of millennial and crystallized entrails; a monumental ruby in the rough—with the organ-point of its flashes directed toward heaven, somewhat like the form of an inverted heart—before being polished!

On certain very bright mornings filled with the dazzling sun of early November, I would go walking all alone in the heart of New York with my bread under my arm. Once I went into a drug store on 57th Street and asked for a fried egg which I ate with a small piece of my large loaf of bread which I cut off to the stupefaction of everyone who gathered round me to watch me and ask me questions. I answered all these questions with shrugs of my shoulders and with timid smiles.

One day when I was walking thus, my bread, which had become entirely dry and had for some time betrayed marked tendencies to crumble, broke into two pieces, and I decided then that the moment had come to get rid of it. I happened to be on the sidewalk just in front of the Hotel Waldorf Astoria. It was exactly twelve o'clock, the hour of the noon-day phantoms, and I decided to go and eat in the Sert Room. But just at the moment of crossing the street I slipped and fell. In my fall the two pieces of bread were tossed violently against the pavement and scooted off some considerable distance. A policeman came and helped me up. I thanked him and began to limp away. But after taking a dozen steps I turned round, curious to observe what had finally happened to the two parts of my bread. They had simply disappeared without leaving the slightest trace, and the manner in which they were spirited away is still an enigma to me. Neither the policeman nor any of the other people on the street had the two large pieces of bread about them. I definitely had the bewildering and disquieting impression that this was a delirious and subjective phenomenon, and that the bread was there somewhere before my eyes, but that I did not see it for affective reasons that I would subsequently discover and that were connected with a whole long history involving the bread.

This became the point of departure for a very important discovery which I decided to communicate to the Sorbonne in Paris under the evocative name of *The Invisible Bread*. In this paper I presented and explained the phenomenon of sudden invisibility of certain objects, a kind of negative hallucination, much more frequent than true hallucinations, but very difficult to recognize because of its amnesic character. One does not immediately see what one is looking at, and this is not a vulgar phenomenon of attention, but very frequently a clearly hallucinatory phenomenon. The power to provoke this kind of hallucination at will

would pose possibilities of invisibility within the framework of real phenomena, becoming one of the most effective weapons of paranoiac magic. One recalls the "involuntary" element which is at the basis of all discoveries. Columbus discovered America while he was looking for the Antipodes. In the Middle Ages, metals like lead and antimony were discovered in the search for the philosopher's stone. And I, while I had been looking for the most directly exhibitionistic way of showing my obsession with bread, had just discovered its invisibility. It was the very invisibility which I had not been able to solve in a satisfactory manner in my *Invisible Man*. What man cannot do, bread can.

My exhibit at Julien Levy's was a great success. Most of the paintings were sold, and critical reaction, while keeping its polemic tone, was unanimous in recognizing my imaginative and pictorial gifts.

I was to leave again for Europe on the *Normandie*, which was sailing at ten o'clock the next morning. For the last night of our stay Caresse Crosby and a group of friends had arranged to give an "oneiric" ball in my honor, at the Coq Rouge. This party, which was got up in one after-



Paint for an exhibition and cigarette holder mounted on the back of a live jungle

noon, remained a kind of "historic institution" in the United States, for it was subsequently repeated and imitated in most American cities. This first "surrealist ball" exceeded in strangeness everything that its organizers had desired and imagined. Indeed the "surrealist dream" brought out the germs of mad fantasy that slumbered in the depths of everyone's brains and desires with the maximum of violence. I myself, though I may be considered to be fairly injured to eccentricity, was surprised at the truculent aspect of the witches' sabbath, at the frenzy of imagination in which that night at the Coq Rouge was plunged. Society

women appeared with their heads in bird cages and their bodies practically naked. Others had painted on their bodies frightful wounds and mutilations, cynically slashing their beauties and transpiercing their flesh with a profusion of safety pins. An extremely slender, pale spiritual woman had a "living" mouth in the middle of her stomach gaping through the satin of her dress. Eyes grew on cheeks, backs, under-arms, like horrible tumors. A man in a bloody night shirt carried a bedside table balanced on his head, from which a flock of multi-colored humming birds flew out at a given moment. In the center of the stairway a bath-tub full of water had been hung, which threatened every moment to fall and empty its contents on the heads of the guests, and in a corner of the ballroom a whole skinned beef had been hooked up, its yawning belly supported by crutches, and its insides stuffed with a half-dozen phonographs. Gala appeared at the ball dressed as an "exquisite corpse." On her head she had fastened a very realistic doll representing a child devoured by ants, whose skull was caught between the claws of a phosphorescent lobster.

The following day we innocently left for Europe. I say "innocently," for on our arrival in Paris we were to learn the scandal of the "oneiric" ball. At this time the feverish excitement over the Lindbergh-baby trial was at its height. The French correspondent of the *Petit Parisien*,¹ along with the usual chronicle of this trial, cabled the sensational news that the wife of the famous surrealist painter, Salvador Dalí, had appeared at a ball with the bloody replica of the Lindbergh baby fastened to her head, and thereby provoked "a great scandal." The only person in New York who was aware of this scandal was the French correspondent of the *Petit Parisien*, who had not even been at the ball. In Paris, however, the news spread like wildfire, and our arrival was greeted with stupefaction.

I was no longer master of my legend, and henceforth surrealism was to be more and more identified with me, and with me only. Much water had passed under the bridge, and I found upon my return that the group I had known—both surrealists and society people—was in a state of complete disintegration. Preoccupations of a political nature had turned a great number of them toward the left, and a whole surrealist faction, obeying the slogans of Louis Aragon, a nervous little Robespierre, was rapidly evolving toward a complete acceptance of the communist cultural platform. This inner crisis of surrealism came to a head the day when, upon my suggesting the building of a "thinking-machine," consisting of a rocking chair from which would hang numerous goblets of warm milk, Aragon flared up with indignation. "Enough of Dalí's fantasies!" he exclaimed. "Warm milk for the children of the unemployed!"

Breton, thinking he saw a danger of obscurantism in the communist-sympathizing faction, decided to expel Aragon and his adherents.

¹ M. de Roussy de Sales.

Bunuel, Unic, Sadoul, and others—from the surrealist group. I considered René Crevel the only completely sincere communist among those I knew at the time, yet he decided not to follow Aragon along what he termed "the path of intellectual mediocrity." Nevertheless he remained distant from our group, and shortly afterward committed suicide, despairing of the possibility of solving the dramatic contradictions of the ideological and intellectual problems confronting the Post-War generation. Crevel was the third surrealist who committed suicide, thus corroborating their affirmative answer to a questionnaire that had been circulated in one of its first issues by the magazine *La Révolution Surrealiste*, in which it was asked, "Is suicide a solution?" I had answered no, supporting this negation with the affirmation of my ceaseless individual activity. The remaining surrealists were in the process of committing suicide gradually, sinking into the growing obscurity of the lethargic and political tittle-tattle of the collective café terraces.

Personally, politics have never interested me, and at that moment less than ever, for they were becoming day by day more wretchedly anecdotic and threatened ruin. On the other hand I undertook the systematic study of the history of religions, especially the Catholic religion, which appeared to me more and more as the "perfect architecture." I began to isolate myself from the group, and to travel constantly: Paris, Port Lligat, New York, back to Port Lligat, London, Paris, Port Lligat. I took advantage of my appearances in Paris to go out into society. Very rich people have always impressed me; very poor people, like the fishermen of Port Lligat, have likewise impressed me; average people, not at all. Around the real surrealist personalities were beginning to gather average people, a whole fauna of misfit and unwashed petty bourgeois. I ran away from them as from the cholera. I went to see André Breton three times a month, Picasso and Eluard twice a week, their disciples never; society people every day and almost every night.

Most society people were unintelligent, but their wives had jewels that were hard as my heart, wore extraordinary perfumes, and adored the music that I detested. I remained always the Catalonian peasant, naive and cunning, with a king in my body. I was bumptious, and I could not get out of my mind the troubling image, post-card style, of a naked society woman loaded with jewels, wearing a sumptuous hat, prostrating herself at my dirty feet. . . .¹ My mania for wearing elegant clothes, harking back to the period of Madrid, took up its abode again in my brain, and I then understood that "elegance" was the materialization of the material refinement of an epoch, being for that very reason only the tangible, acute simulacrum, the clarion-call of religion.

Nothing is in fact more tragic and vain than fashion, and just as for an intelligence of the first order, like my own, the war of 1914 was

¹ I have heard a Catalonian painter say of someone very dirty, "Imagine how dirty he was—that black stuff we all have between our toes he has between his fingers!"

I believe in magic, and am convinced that all new efforts at cosmogony and even metaphysics should be based on magic, and should recapture the state of mind that had guided brains like those of Paracelsus and Raymond Lully. The critical-paranoiac interpretation of the images that involuntarily strike my perception, of the fortuitous events that occur in the course of my days, of the so frequent and so violent phenomena of "objective hazard" that cast enigmatic rays of light over the most insignificant of my acts—the interpretation of all this, I repeat, is nothing other than the interpretative reading, which is capable of giving an objective coherence to the signs, omens, avatars, divinations, presentiments and superstitions which are the very sustenance of all "personal magic."

But if I myself am able during short periods to read quite clearly the exact outcome of certain nearby events, Gala on the other hand is a true medium in the scientific sense of the word. Gala is never, never, never wrong. She reads cards with a paralyzing sureness. She predicted to my father the exact course of my life up to the present moment. She foretold the illness and suicide of René Crevel, and the very day of the declaration of war on Germany.



She believes in my wood—a piece of wood that I found at the beginning of our acquaintance among the rocks of Cape Creus, under extraordinary circumstances. Since then we have never been without this "pure Dalinian fetish," though we have lost it on several occasions. Once we lost it in Covent Garden in London, and found in again the next day. Another time it had been taken out with the bed sheets. It was necessary to go minutely over the whole laundry of the Hotel St. Moritz, yet we finally found it. This piece of wood has assumed in my mind the form of a compulsive maniacal neurosis. When I get the idea that I ought to go and touch it, I cannot resist doing it. At this very moment I am forced to get up to go and touch it . . .

There! I have just touched it, and with this my anxiety, which otherwise would only have grown agonizingly, has been calmed. Before the compulsive maniacal psychosis that now is exercised exclusively in connection with my piece of wood, I was full of manias, tics, and neurotic rituals that were extremely cumbersome. My ritual for going to bed, for instance, was very long and minute. Everything in my room had to be placed in a certain pre-determined way—the door opened at just a certain angle, my socks symmetrically arranged on a certain exact part of the armchair, always the same. The slightest infraction of these rituals would make it necessary for me to get up out of bed to rectify it, even if this was extremely disagreeable to me, and if I had to get up several times. Since I found my piece of wood in 1931 I have been freed of all my manias and rituals. I have been able to do everything as I have wished, provided only that each time I think of it my wood-fetish¹ is there with me. In any case my piece of wood is there, there, and there! It is my prayer . . .

The September equinox was going to bring us the Munich crisis. In spite of the fact that Gala's cards had predicted that war would not "yet" come this time, we prudently left Italy and spent the Munich crisis in La Posa, on the hills of Monte Carlo, with Mademoiselle Chanel, constantly glued to the radio. This "equinox" was to last four months, during which I remained at Chanel's in the company of the great French poet, Pierre Reverdy, whose terribly elemental and biological Catholicism made a deep impression on me. Reverdy is the integral poet of the generation of cubists. He is the soul possessing the most violent and finest set of teeth I have ever known, and has that gift, which is so rare, of spiritual anger and rage. He was "massive," anti-intellectual, and the opposite of myself in everything, and provided me a magnificent occasion to strengthen my ideas. We fought dialectically like two Catholic cocks, and we called this "examining the question."

During this period I was preparing my forthcoming exhibit in New York, writing the general plan of my "secret life" and painting *The Enigma of Hitler*, a very difficult painting to interpret, whose meaning still eludes me. It constituted a condensed reportage of a series of dreams obviously occasioned by the events of Munich. This picture appeared to me to be charged with a prophetic value, as announcing the medieval period which was going to spread its shadow over Europe. Chamberlain's umbrella appeared in this painting in a sinister aspect, identified with the bat, and affected me as extremely anguishing at the very time I was painting it . . .

On my arrival in New York I was astonished by the window displays on Fifth Avenue, which all were trying more or less to ape Dalí. I

¹ Fetish: a tangible, objective and symbolic materialization of desire; by sublimation, a wish, a "prayer."

immediately received another proposal from Bonwit-Teller's shop asking me to dress two of their windows. I accepted, for I thought it would be interesting to make a public demonstration of the difference between the true and the false Dali manner. I laid down only one condition: that I be allowed to do exactly what came into my head. This condition was accepted, and I was put in touch with the man who was in charge of their window displays, a Mr. Lee, who was at all times extremely obliging.

I detested modern manikins, those horrible creatures, so hard, so inedible, with their idiotically turned-up noses. This time I wanted flesh, artificial flesh, as anachronistic as possible. We went and unearthed in the attic of an old shop some frightful wax manikins of the 1900 period with long natural dead women's hair. These manikins were marvelously covered with several years' dust and cobwebs. I said to Lee, "Be sure not to let anyone touch that dust, it's their chief beauty. I'm going to serve these manikins to the Fifth Avenue public as one serves an old bottle of Armagnac that has just been brought up from the cellar with infinite precautions." With great care we succeeded in transporting them almost in the state in which we had found them. I knew that their state was going to make a startling contrast with the frame of padded satin and mirrors that I had thought up.

The theme of the display was intentionally banal. One of the displays symbolized Day, and the other, Night. In the "Day" display one of these manikins was stepping into a "hairy bathtub" lined with astrakhan. It was filled with water up to the edge, and a pair of beautiful wax arms holding up a mirror evoked the Narcissus myth; natural narcissi grew directly out of the floor of the bedroom and out of the furniture. "Night" was symbolized by a bed whose canopy was composed of the black and sleepy head of a buffalo carrying a bloody pigeon in its mouth; the feet of the bed were made of the four feet of the buffalo. The bedsheets of black satin were visibly burnt, and through the holes could be seen artificial live coals. The pillow on which the manikin rested her dreamy head was composed entirely of live coals. Beside the bed was seated the phantom of sleep, conceived in the metaphysical style of Chirico. It was bedecked in all the sparkling jewels of desire of which the sleeping wax woman was dreaming. This manifesto of elementary surrealist poetry right out in the street would inevitably arrest the anguished attention of passers-by with stupor when the morrow, amid so much surrealist decorativism, lifted the curtain on an authentic Dalinian vision.

On leaving the Metropolitan Opera, where we had attended a performance of *Lohengrin*, Gala and I went to Bonwit-Teller's, where my two displays were being set up. I thought up on the spot a whole series of new lyric inventions, and we stayed to put the finishing touches to the two displays till six o'clock in the morning. Gala had completely torn her dress in the ardor of nailing and hanging false jewels everywhere. Dead tired, we went to bed.

The following day we had a large luncheon affair to attend, and it was only around five o'clock that we decided to go and set the effect of my displays. Imagine my anger when we discovered that everything, absolutely everything, had been changed, without my even having been accorded the courtesy of being informed of it! The wax manikins had been replaced by the shop's conventional manikins; the bed and its sleeping occupant had been removed! Of my idea there remained only the satin-padded walls—in other words, what I had put in as a joke! Gala understood by my pallor and by the sobriety of my reaction that I had suddenly become dangerous.

"Go and talk to them," she begged me, "but be reasonable; let them remove all that rubbish, and let's forget about it!"

She went back to the hotel, for she felt that any kind of advice at this moment would only exasperate me. I went up to the management of Bonwit-Teller's where, after having been made to wait in a corridor a good fifteen minutes, I was received by a gentleman who expressed his happiness at knowing such a great artist as myself. I then told him, through an interpreter, and with the greatest politeness, that I had just observed on passing by in the street that my work had been changed without my being advised, that I therefore wished my name to be removed from the display and this display completely changed, for the adulteration of my work could only harm my reputation. The gentleman answered that they had the right to keep "what they had liked" of my ideas, and that it would be awkward for the store to lower the shades in broad daylight to make the changes that I requested. These changes actually would not have required more than ten minutes, and I was about to give a practical demonstration of the fact that the whole thing could be done in one second. The rude manner in which my reasonable and legitimate request was answered instantly led me to deliver an ultimatum, and I announced to the gentleman that I demanded the removal of my name and of the parts of my display that still remained in the windows. "If this is not done within ten minutes," I said, "I shall take drastic action."



I had just decided exactly what I would do. I was going to go down, enter the display room, and upset the bathtub filled with water. With

the place inundated, they would certainly be forced to lower the shade and take everything out. This appeared as the sole solution, for the idea of starting a suit against Bonwit-Teller struck me as childish.

The gentleman explained to me that they had changed my displays because they had been too successful; that there had been a constant crowd gathered around them which blocked the traffic; and that now they were just right, and that he would not for the world remove them after all the expense they had gone to.

I bowed my head with the utmost correctness and walked out, leaving each of the two gentlemen wearing a smile expressive of the most complete scepticism. I went down to the main floor and very calmly headed for the display-window where the bath-tub stood and stepped inside. I paused for a moment to savor the act I was about to commit, and looked through the window at the bizarre crowd which at this hour literally inundated the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue. There must have been something very unusual about my apparition in the window, for a large crowd gathered to watch me.

I took hold of the bath-tub with both hands, and tried to lift it so as to turn it over. I felt like the Biblical Samson between the pillars of the temple. The bath-tub was much heavier than I had calculated, and before I could raise one side it slipped right up against the window so that at the moment when with a supreme effort I finally succeeded in turning it over it crashed into the plate glass, shattering it into a thousand pieces. The crowd immediately fell back in a wide semicircle with a movement of instinctive terror, dodging the glass-splinters and the water from the bath-tub which now was spilling onto the sidewalk. Then I coolly appraised the situation and judged it much more reasonable to leave by the hole in the window bristling with the stalactites and



Salvador
7/23
Dinner-jacket?



XV. Last Days of Happiness in Europe

The Homeric luncheons at Palamos. From left to right: Charlie Bestegui, Roussie Sert, Bettina Bergery, Salvador Dali, Countess Madina Visconti, Jose-Maria Sert, Gala Dali, Baroness von Thyssen, Prince Alexis Mdivani.

René Crevel, observing a snail, foreshadows the distress felt in Europe when he committed suicide.

My best friend, Mademoiselle Chanel, at Rochebrune. House of Salvador and Gala Dali at Port Lligat.

Roussie Sert and Dali at Palamos.

Gala: The Olive.

Dali, Princess Nathalie Paley, and Gala at Palamos.

Gala in sailor costume at Cadaques, the day she caught 15 lobsters in a single morning.



XVI. My Heteroclitte Life in America

I draw Harpo Marx in Hollywood.
I invent a hallucinatory mask, during breakfast in bed
at the Hotel St. Regis in New York.

At Caresse Crosby's place in Virginia, a black piano,
black dogs, and black pigs are assembled on the snow,
and negroes sing while I work. Caresse is at the
piano. (Courtesy Eric Schaal-Pix.)

Based on my plans, "The Dream of Venus" is con-
structed at the Amusement Park of the World's Fair
in New York. (Courtesy Eric Schaal-Pix.)

the stalagmites of my anger than to go back through the door in the rear of the shop window. Barely had I jumped through the frame and landed on the sidewalk than a large piece of glass which must have held up by a miracle became detached and cut down across the space I had just passed through—and it was another miracle that I was not guillotined by it, for judging by its dimensions and weight it might very easily have split my head wide open.

Having reached the sidewalk, I slipped on the coat that I was carrying over my arm, for the air was sharp and cool and I was afraid of catching cold. With a slow step I headed for my hotel. I had only gone some ten paces when an extremely polite plainclothesman delicately placed his hand on my shoulder, and explained apologetically that he had to arrest me.

Gala and my friends came running to the station to which I was taken, and my lawyer presented me with two alternatives: I could either be immediately released on bail, and the trial would take place much later; or if I preferred, I could remain for a short time in jail, together with the other people who were being held, and then my case would come up within a few hours. I was anxious to have this matter over with as soon as possible, and decided on the second alternative.

The promiscuity in which I was forced to live with the other prisoners terrorized me. Most of them were drunks and professional bums, who vomited and fought among themselves with an admirable optimism. I kept running from one corner to another to escape the splatterings of all that swarming ignominy, and my distress must have been noticed by a small gentleman loaded with rings and gold chains which hung ostentatiously from all his pockets, and whom in spite of his slight stature and his effeminate look all those brawny, two-fisted fellows seemed to respect.

"You're Spanish," he said to me, "I can see that right off. I'm from Puerto Rico. Why are you here?"

"I broke a window," I answered.

"That's nothing. They'll fine you a few dollars, and that's all. It was a saloon, wasn't it? In what part of town did you break the window?"

"It wasn't a saloon, it was a shop on Fifth Avenue."

"Fifth Avenue!" exclaimed the small gentleman from Puerto Rico, in a manner indicating that I had suddenly risen in his estimation. Immediately taking me under his protection he added, "You can tell me all about it later. Right now stay close to me and don't be afraid of anything. Nobody'll touch you while you're here."

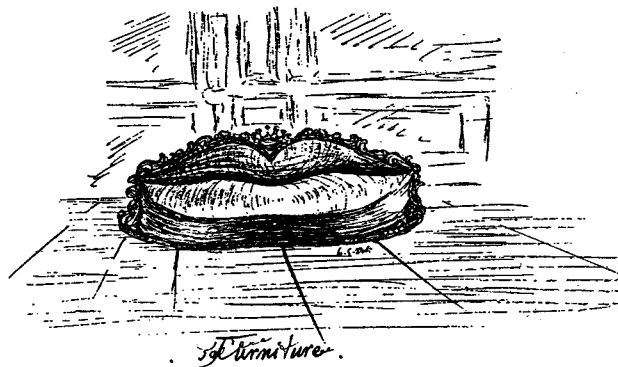
He must certainly have been an important figure in these circles.

The judge who tried my case betrayed upon his severe features the amusement that my story afforded him. He ruled that my act was "excessively violent" and that since I had broken a window I would have to pay for it, but he made a point of adding emphatically that every artist has a right to defend his "work" to the limit.

The following day the press reacted, giving me a warm and moving proof of its sympathy, and I received a shower of telegrams and letters from artists and private individuals all over the country, telling me that by my act I had not only defended my "personal case" but also that of the independence of American art, too often subjected to the incompetence of intermediaries of an industrial and commercial type. I had thus unintentionally touched one of the country's open wounds.

Immediately after I had broken my Bonwit-Teller window, I received an offer to do "another one," entirely to my taste—a monumental one, that would not have to be broken, in the New York World's Fair which was to open in another month and a half, and I signed a contract with a corporation,¹ a contract which appeared to me unequivocally to guarantee my "complete imaginative freedom."

This pavilion was to be called *The Dream of Venus*, but in reality it was a frightful nightmare, for after some time I realized that the corporation in question intended to make *The Dream of Venus* with its own



imagination, and that what it wanted of me was my name, which had become dazzling from the publicity point of view. I still did not speak a word of English, and the whole struggle to impose the least of my ideas had to be carried out through my secretary, who sweated blood! Each day there was a new explosion. I had designed costumes for my swimming girls executed after ideas of Leonardo da Vinci's, and instead of this they constantly kept bringing me horrible costumes of sirens with rubber fish-tails! I realized that all this was going to end up in a fish-tail—that is, badly. I explicitly stated a thousand times that I would not hear of those sirens' tails that the corporation wanted at all costs to impose on me, claiming that I did not know the psychology of the

¹In French, *société anonyme*, which explains Dalí's subsequent play on the word "anonymous."—Translator's note.

American public. I shouted, I lost my temper—all through my secretary. The sirens' tails would disappear for a while and suddenly they would reappear, like the bitter after-taste of some greasy and indigestible foods.

Realizing that the explanations and the letters of protest that my secretary typed every evening to the point of exhaustion were becoming more and more ineffective, I told him to stop all these explanations, and to buy me a large pair of scissors. I appeared the following morning in the workshop where *The Dream of Venus* was being set up. My contract granted me the supreme right of supervision, and I was going to use and abuse this right with the challenging force of my scissors. The first thing I did was to cut open, one after another, the dozen sirens' tails intended for the swimming girls, thus making them totally unusable. After this I attacked the fluorescent gold and silver wigs which I had not called for either—a wholly gratuitous and anonymous fantasy of the corporation's. I cut them into braids which I dipped in tar, to be stuck to umbrellas turned inside out which were to line the ceiling of the pavilion. Thus these umbrellas appeared as if covered with a lugubrious Spanish moss in mourning. After having transformed the wigs of the sirens into Spanish moss, I used my scissors, which were but the cutting symbol of the vengeance of my personality, to cut, snip, puncture and annihilate everything, sticking them finally right into the heart of the "anonymous" corporation, which in the end cried "Ayl" and raised its arms in sign of surrender.

Resigned, they agreed to do whatever my royal will commanded them. But my struggles were not over, for sabotage was about to begin. They did "approximately" what I ordered, but so badly and with such bad faith that the pavilion turned out to be a lamentable caricature of my ideas and of my projects. I published on this subject a manifesto: *Declaration of Independence of the Imagination and of the Rights of Man to His Own Madness* (New York, 1939), to rid myself of the moral responsibility for such an adulterated work, for it was not possible to break the windows a second time (in spite of the fact that, given the dimensions of the swimming pool in which my exhibit was placed, this was tempting, and would have produced a fine effect, with the flooding of the entire pavilion).

I left for Europe, disgusted with *The Dream of Venus*, long before it was finished—so that I never did see my work completed. I was to learn subsequently that no sooner had I left than the corporation took advantage of my absence to fill *The Nightmare of Venus* with the anonymous tails of anonymous sirens, thus making what little was left of Dalí perfectly anonymous.

On the *Champlain* that took me back to Europe I had time to revise and situate more philosophically my feelings of admiration for the elementary and biologically intact force of "American democracy," an admiration often expressed in a fervent and lyrical form in the course