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Salvador Estrella Sadhalá was thinking that he would never see Lebanon, and the thought depressed him. From the time he was a boy he had dreamed that one day he would visit Upper Lebanon, and Basquinta, the town, perhaps a village, that had been the home of the Sadhalá family and from which, at the end of the last century, his mother's forebears had been expelled for being Catholics. Salvador grew up hearing from Mama Paulina about the adventures and misfortunes of the prosperous merchants the Sadhalás had been in Lebanon: how they lost everything, how Don Abraham Sadhalá and his family suffered as they fled the persecutions the Muslim majority inflicted on the Christian minority. They wandered half the world, faithful to Christ and the Cross, until they landed in Haiti and then moved to the Dominican Republic. They settled in Santiago de los Caballeros, and by working with the family's proverbial dedication and honesty, became prosperous and respected again in their adopted country. Though he saw little of his maternal relatives, Salvador, bewitched by the stories of Mama Paulina, always felt himself to be a Sadhalá. Which is why he had dreamed of visiting the mysterious Basquinta that he never found on maps of the Middle East. Why was he certain now that he would never set foot in the exotic country of his ancestors?

"I think I fell asleep," he heard Antonio de la Maza say from the back seat. He saw him rubbing his eyes.

"You all fell asleep," said Salvador. "Don't worry, I'm keeping an eye on the cars coming from Ciudad Trujillo."

"So am I," said Lieutenant Amado García Guerrero, sitting beside him. "It looks like I'm sleeping because I don't move a

muscle and blank out my mind. It's a relaxation technique I learned in the Army."

"Are you sure he's coming, Amadito?" Antonio Imbert, sitting at the wheel, challenged him. Turk could hear his tone of reproach. How unfair! As if Amadito were to blame if Trujillo canceled his trip to San Cristóbal.

"Yes, Tony," grumbled the lieutenant, with fanatical certainty. "He's coming."

Turk was no longer so sure; they had been waiting for an hour and a quarter. And probably had lost another day, filled with enthusiasm, anguish, and hope. At the age of forty-two, Salvador was one of the oldest of the seven men stationed in the three cars that lay in wait for Trujillo on the highway to San Cristóbal. He didn't feel old, not at all. His strength was still as remarkable as it had been when he was thirty, and, on the Los Almácigos farm, they said that Turk could kill a donkey with a single punch behind the ear. The power of his muscles was legendary, and known by all those who had put on gloves to box with him in the ring at the Santiago Reformatory, where, thanks to his efforts to teach them sports, he had achieved remarkable results with delinquent and homeless boys. Kid Dynamite came from there, a Golden Gloves winner who became a boxer well known throughout the Caribbean.

Salvador loved the Sadhalá family and was proud of his Arab-Lebanese blood, but the Sadhalás had not wanted him to be born; they had put up fierce opposition when his mother, Paulina, told them she was being courted by Piro Estrella, a mulatto, a soldier, and a politician, three things—Turk smiled—that gave the Sadhalás the chills. The family's resistance drove Piro Estrella to run off with Mama Paulina, take her to Moca, drag the priest to the church at gunpoint, and force him to marry them. Over time, the Sadhalás and the Estrellas reconciled. When Mama Paulina died, in 1936, there were ten Estrella Sadhalá children. General Piro Estrella fathered another seven in his second marriage, so that Turk had sixteen legitimate siblings. What would happen to them if they failed

tonight? Above all, what would happen to his brother Guaro, who knew nothing about any of this? General Guarionex Estrella Sadhalá had been head of Trujillo's military adjutants and was currently commander of the Second Brigade in La Vega. If the plot failed, the reprisals against him would be savage. But why would it fail? It had been carefully prepared. As soon as his superior, General José René (Pupo) Román, informed Guarionex that Trujillo was dead and a civilian-military junta was taking power, he would place all the military forces in the north at the service of the new regime. Would it really happen? Discouragement, brought on by waiting, overwhelmed Salvador again.

Half closing his eyes, not moving his lips, he prayed. He did this several times a day, aloud when he woke up and went to bed, in silence the rest of the time. Our Fathers and Hail Marys, but also prayers he improvised according to circumstances. Since his youth he had been in the habit of involving God in his large and small problems, confiding his secrets and asking advice. He begged Him to let Trujillo come, begged that His infinite grace would at last permit them to kill the executioner of Dominicans, the Beast who had now turned his fierce wrath against the Church of Christ and its shepherds. Until recently, Turk had been indecisive about putting Trujillo to death, but since he had received the sign, he could speak to the Lord about tyrannicide with a clear conscience. The sign had been the words read to him by His Holiness's nuncio.

It was because of Father Fortín, a Canadian priest residing in Santiago, that Salvador had the conversation with Monsignor Lino Zanini, and because of that, he was here now. For many years, Father Cipriano Fortín had been his spiritual adviser. Once or twice a month they had long conversations in which Turk opened his heart and his conscience to him; the priest would listen, answer his questions, and express his own doubts. Imperceptibly, political matters began to replace personal ones in their conversations. Why did the Church of Christ support a regime stained with blood? How could the

Church shelter with its moral authority a leader who committed abominable crimes?

Turk remembered Father Fortín's embarrassment. He ventured explanations that did not even convince himself: render unto God what is God's and unto Caesar what is Caesar's. Does such a separation even exist for Trujillo, Father? Doesn't he go to Mass, doesn't he receive the blessing and the consecrated host? Aren't there Masses, Te Deums, benedictions for all the government's actions? Don't bishops and priests sanctify acts of tyranny every day? What circumstances allowed the Church to abandon the faithful and identify in this way with Trujillo?

Ever since his childhood, Salvador had known how difficult, how impossible it sometimes was to subject his daily behavior to the commandments of his religion. His principles and beliefs, though firm, had not stopped him from drinking or chasing women. He could never atone enough for having fathered two children out of wedlock before he married Urania Mieses. These errors shamed him, and he had attempted to rectify them, though he had not placated his conscience. Yes, it was very difficult not to offend Christ in one's daily life. He, a poor mortal marked by original sin, was proof of man's innate weaknesses. But how could the Church inspired by God make the mistake of supporting a cruel, merciless man?

Until sixteen months ago—he would never forget that day: Sunday, January 24, 1960—when the miracle occurred. A rainbow in the Dominican sky. January 21 had been the festival of the country's patron saint, Our Lady of Altagracia, and also the date of the most extensive roundup of June 14 members. The Church of Altagracia, on that sunlit morning in Santiago, was packed. Suddenly, from the pulpit, in a firm voice, Father Cipriano Fortín began to read—shepherds of Christ were doing the same in every Dominican church—the Pastoral Letter that shook the Republic. It was a hurricane, even more dramatic than the famous San Zenón storm in 1930, at the beginning of the Trujillo Era, that wiped out the capital city.

In the darkness of the automobile, Salvador Estrella Sadhalá, immersed in the memory of that glorious day, smiled. Hearing Father Fortín read, in his lightly French-accented Spanish, each sentence of the Pastoral Letter that drove the Beast mad with rage, seemed a response to his doubts and anguish. He knew the text so well—after hearing it he had read the letter, which was secretly printed and distributed all over the country—he had almost memorized it. A "shadow of sorrow" marked the festival of the Dominican Virgin. "We cannot remain oblivious to the deep suffering that afflicts so many Dominican homes," the bishops said. Like St. Peter, they wanted "to weep with those who weep." They recalled that "the root and foundation of all rights lie in the inviolate dignity of the human person." A quotation from Pius XII evoked the "millions of human beings who continue to live under oppression and tyranny," for whom "nothing is secure: not their homes, their property, their liberty, nor their honor."

Each sentence made Salvador's heart beat faster. "To whom does the *right to life* belong but to God alone, Creator of life?" The bishops emphasized that from this "primordial right" all others spring: the right to have a family, to work, to transact business, to immigrate (wasn't this a condemnation of the infamous system of having to request police permission each time you left the country?), and the right to one's good name and to not be slandered "on trivial pretexts or in anonymous denunciations . . . for base and despicable motives." The Pastoral Letter reaffirmed that "all men have the right to freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, and free association. . ." The bishops were sending up prayers "in this time of affliction and uncertainty" that there might be "harmony and peace" and that there might be established in the nation "the sacred rights of human brotherhood."

Salvador was so moved that when he left the church he could not even talk about the Pastoral Letter with his wife or the friends who had gathered at the entrance, stammering with surprise, enthusiasm, or fear at what they had just heard. There

was no possible confusion: the Pastoral Letter came from Archbishop Ricardo Pittini and was signed by the five bishops in the country.

Mumbling an excuse, he left his family and, like a sleepwalker, returned to the church. He went to the sacristy. Father Fortín was removing his chasuble. He smiled: "You're proud of your Church now, Salvador, aren't you?" He could not speak. He gave the priest a long embrace. Yes, the Church of Christ had finally come over to the side of the victims.

"The reprisals will be terrible, Father Fortín," he murmured.

They were. But with the regime's perverse capacity for intrigue, it concentrated its revenge on the two foreign bishops and ignored those born on Dominican soil. Monsignor Thomas F. Reilly, in San Juan de la Maguana, an American, and Monsignor Francisco Panal, in La Vega, a Spaniard, were the targets of the ignominious campaign.

In the weeks following the jubilation of January 24, 1960, Salvador considered, for the first time, the need to kill Trujillo. Initially the idea horrified him: a Catholic had to respect the Fifth Commandment. And yet he returned to it, irresistibly, every time he read in *El Caribe* or *La Nación*, or heard on the Dominican Voice, the attacks against Monsignor Panal and Monsignor Reilly: they were agents of foreign powers, sellouts to Communism, colonialists, traitors, vipers. Poor Monsignor Panal! Accusing a priest of being a foreigner when he had spent thirty years doing his apostolic work in La Vega, where he was loved equally by opposing factions. The calumnies hatched by Johnny Abbes—who else could concoct such vileness?—which Turk heard from Father Fortín and the human tom-tom, did away with his scruples. The final straw was the act of sacrilege mounted against Monsignor Panal in the church in La Vega, where the bishop was saying twelve o'clock Mass. The nave was crowded with parishioners, and when Monsignor Panal was reading the day's lesson from Scripture, a gang of heavily made-up, half-naked prostitutes burst into

the church and, to the stupefied amazement of the worshipers, approached the pulpit, hurled insults and recriminations at the aged bishop, and accused him of having fathered their children and engaging in sexual perversions. One of them grabbed the microphone and howled: "Recognize the babies you gave us, don't let them die of starvation." When some people finally reacted and tried to remove the whores from the church and protect the bishop, who was staring in disbelief, the *caliés* stormed in—about twenty hoodlums armed with clubs and chains—and attacked the parishioners mercilessly. The poor bishops! They painted their houses with insults. In San Juan de la Maguana, they dynamited the van that Monsignor Reilly used to drive around his diocese, and bombarded his house every night with dead animals, urine, live rats, until he was forced to take refuge in Ciudad Trujillo, in the Santo Domingo Academy. The indestructible Monsignor Panal continued to resist threats, slanders, and insults in La Vega. An old man made of the stuff of martyrs.

It was during this time that Turk came to Father Fortín's house, his large, heavy face transformed.

"What's the matter, Salvador?"

"I'm going to kill Trujillo, Father. I want to know if I'll go to hell." He broke down. "It can't go on. What they're doing to the bishops, to the churches, that disgusting campaign on television, on the radio, in the papers. It has to stop, and the only way is to cut off the hydra's head. Will I go to hell?"

Father Fortín calmed him down. He offered him coffee he had just prepared, he took him out for a long walk along the laurel-lined streets of Santiago. A week later he announced that the papal nuncio, Monsignor Lino Zanini, would grant him a private audience in Ciudad Trujillo. Turk felt intimidated when he presented himself at the nunciature's elegant mansion on Avenida Máximo Gómez. From the very first moment, this prince of the Church put the timid giant, constrained by the shirt and tie he had worn for his audience with the Pope's representative, at ease.

How elegant Monsignor Zanini was, how well-spoken! No doubt he was a real prince. Salvador had heard many stories about the nuncio, and liked him because they said Trujillo hated him. Was it true that Perón had left the country, after spending seven months here as an exile, when he learned of the arrival of His Holiness's new nuncio? Everybody said he had hurried to the National Palace: "Be careful, Excellency. With the Church you can't win. Remember what happened to me. It wasn't the military that overthrew me, it was the priests. This nuncio the Vatican is sending you is like the one they sent me when my difficulties with the crows began. Watch out for him!" And the former Argentine dictator packed his bags and fled to Spain.

After that encounter, Turk was ready to believe anything good said about Monsignor Zanini. The nuncio led him to his office, offered him a cold drink, encouraged him to let out what he was carrying inside, with affable comments in a Spanish spoken with Italian music that had the effect of an angelic melody on Salvador. The nuncio heard him say that he could no longer endure what was happening, that the regime's actions against the Church and its bishops were driving him mad. After a long pause, he grasped the nuncio's ringed hand:

"I'm going to kill Trujillo, Monsignor. Will there be forgiveness for my soul?"

His voice broke. He sat, his eyes lowered, his breathing agitated. He felt Monsignor Zanini's paternal hand on his back. When, at last, he raised his eyes, the nuncio was holding a book by St. Thomas Aquinas. His fresh face smiled at him with a roguish air. One of his fingers was pointing to a passage on the open page. Salvador leaned forward and read: "God looks with favor upon the physical elimination of the Beast if a people is freed thereby."

He left the nunciature in a trance. He walked for a long time along Avenida George Washington, at the edge of the sea, feeling a tranquillity of spirit he had not known for years. He would kill the Beast, and God and His Church would forgive

him; staining his hands with blood would wash away the blood the Beast was spilling in his homeland.

But would he come? He felt the awful tension that waiting had caused in his companions. Nobody opened his mouth, or even moved. He could hear them breathing: Antonio Imbert, in long, quiet inhalations as he clutched the wheel; Antonio de la Maza, panting rapidly, did not take his eyes from the road; and, beside him, the regular, deep breathing of Amadito, whose face was turned as well toward Ciudad Trujillo. His three friends probably held their weapons in their hands, as he did. Turk felt the butt of the Smith & Wesson .38, bought some time ago at a friend's hardware store in Santiago. Amadito, in addition to his .45 pistol, was carrying an M-1 rifle—part of the ludicrous Yankee contribution to the conspiracy—and, like Antonio, one of the two 12-gauge Browning shotguns, the barrels cut down by a Spaniard, Miguel Ángel Bissié, a friend of Antonio de la Maza, in his workshop. They were loaded with special projectiles that another Spanish friend of Antonio's, Manuel de Ovín Filpo, a former artillery officer, had prepared for them with the assurance that each shell had enough killing power to pulverize an elephant. God willing. It was Salvador who proposed that the CIA's carbines be used by Lieutenant García Guerrero and Antonio de la Maza, and that they occupy the right-hand seats next to the windows. They were the best shots, they should be the first to shoot at the closest distance. But would he come, would he come?

Salvador Estrella Sadhalá's gratitude and admiration for Monsignor Zanini increased when, a few weeks after their conversation in the nunciature, he learned that the Sisters of Mercy had decided to transfer Gisela, his sister who was a nun—Sor Paulina—from Santiago to Puerto Rico. Gisela, his pampered little sister, Salvador's favorite. Even more so since she had embraced the religious life. On the day she made her vows and adopted Mama Paulina's name, huge tears ran down Turk's cheeks. Whenever he could spend time with Sor

Paulina, he felt redeemed, comforted, more spiritual, touched by the serenity and joy emanating from his beloved sister, the tranquil certainty with which she lived her life of service to God. Had Father Fortín told the nuncio how frightened he was about what might happen to his sister if the regime discovered that he was conspiring? Not for a moment did he believe that the transfer of Sor Paulina to Puerto Rico was coincidental. It was a wise and generous decision by the Church of Christ to place a pure, innocent young woman, whom Johnny Abbes's killers would devour, beyond the reach of the Beast. It was one of the regime's customs that most angered Salvador: venting its wrath on the families of those it wanted to punish, on their parents, children, brothers and sisters, confiscating all they had, imprisoning them, taking away their jobs. If the plan failed, the reprisals against his sisters and brothers would be implacable. Not even his father, General Piro Estrella, the Benefactor's good friend, who gave banquets in Trujillo's honor at his ranch in Las Lavas, would be excused. He had weighed all of this, over and over again. He had made his decision. And it was a relief to know that criminal hands could not touch Sor Paulina in her convent in Puerto Rico. From time to time she sent him a letter filled with affection and good humor, written in her clear, upright hand.

In spite of his religious devotion, it had never occurred to Salvador to do what Giselita had done and enter an order. It was a vocation he admired and envied, but one from which the Lord had excluded him. He never would have been able to keep the vows, especially the one of chastity. God had made him too earthbound, too willing to surrender to the instincts that a shepherd of Christ had to annihilate in order to fulfill his mission. He had always liked women; even now, when he led a life of marital fidelity with only occasional slips that tore at his conscience for a long time afterward, the presence of a brunette with a narrow waist and rounded hips, a sensual mouth and flashing eyes—the typical Dominican beauty with mischief in her glance, her walk, her talk, the movements of her hands—

aroused Salvador and inflamed him with fantasies and desires.

These were temptations he usually resisted. His friends often made fun of him, in particular Antonio de la Maza, who, after Tavito's murder, had turned to the wild life, because Turk refused to join them on their all-night visits to brothels, or to the houses where the madams had young girls rumored to be virgins. True, sometimes he succumbed. And then the bitterness lasted many days. For some time he had held Trujillo responsible when he gave in to these temptations. It was the fault of the Beast that so many Dominicans turned to whores, drinking binges, and other dissipations in order to ease their anguish at leading a life without a shred of liberty or dignity, in a country where human life was worth nothing. Trujillo had been one of Satan's most effective allies.

"That's him!" roared Antonio de la Maza.

And Amadito and Tony Imbert:

"It's him! That's him!"

"Pull out, damn it!"

Antonio Imbert already had, and the Chevrolet that had been parked facing Ciudad Trujillo whirled around, tires screeching—Salvador thought of a police movie—and headed for San Cristóbal, following Trujillo's car along the dark, deserted highway. Was it him? Salvador didn't see, but his companions seemed so certain it had to be him that it had to be him. His heart pounded in his chest. Antonio and Amadito lowered the windows, and as Imbert, who leaned over the wheel like a rider making his horse jump, accelerated, the wind was so strong that Salvador could barely keep his eyes open. He protected them with his free hand—the other was holding the revolver—as their distance from the red taillights gradually diminished.

"Are you sure it's the Goat's Chevrolet, Amadito?" he shouted.

"I'm sure, I'm sure," the lieutenant cried. "I recognized the driver, Zacarías de la Cruz. Didn't I tell you he would come?"

"Step on it, damn it," Antonio de la Maza repeated for the

third or fourth time. He had put his head, and the sawed-off barrel of his carbine, out the window.

"You were right, Amadito," Salvador heard himself shout. "He came, and without an escort, just like you said."

The lieutenant held his rifle in both hands. He leaned to one side, his back was turned, and with his finger on the trigger, he rested the butt of the M-1 on his shoulder. "Thank you, God, in the name of your Dominican children," Salvador prayed.

Antonio de la Maza's Chevrolet Biscayne raced along the highway, gaining on the light blue Chevrolet Bel Air that Amadito García Guerrero had described to them so many times. Turk identified the official black-and-white license plate, number 0–1823, and the cloth curtains on the windows. It was, yes, it was, the car the Chief used to go to his Mahogany House in San Cristóbal. Salvador had been having a recurrent nightmare about the Chevrolet Biscayne that Tony Imbert was driving. In it, they were driving just as they were now, under a moonlit, star-filled sky, and suddenly this brand-new car, specially prepared for pursuit, began to decelerate, to go more slowly, until, with all of them cursing, it stopped dead. And Salvador watched the Benefactor's automobile disappear into the darkness.

The Chevrolet Bel Air continued to speed—it must have been going more than a hundred kilometers an hour—and was clearly outlined in the high beams that Imbert turned on. Salvador had heard in detail the story of this vehicle ever since, following Lieutenant García Guerrero's proposal, they had agreed to ambush Trujillo on his weekly drive to San Cristóbal. It was evident that their success would depend on a fast car. Antonio de la Maza had a passion for cars. At Santo Domingo Motors they were not surprised that someone whose job near the Haitian border required him to drive hundreds of kilometers a week would want a special automobile. They recommended a Chevrolet Biscayne and ordered it for him from the United States. It had arrived in Ciudad Trujillo three months ago. Salvador remembered the day they took it out for a test

drive, and how they laughed when they read in the brochure that this car was identical to the ones used by the New York police to pursue criminals. Air conditioning, automatic transmission, hydraulic brakes, and a 350 cc eight-cylinder engine. It cost seven thousand dollars and Antonio had said, "Pesos have never been put to better use." They tested it on the outskirts of Moca, and the brochure did not exaggerate: it could reach a hundred sixty kilometers an hour.

"Careful, Tony," he heard himself say after a jolt that must have dented a fender. Antonio and Amadito did not seem to notice; their weapons and heads were still leaning out the windows, waiting for Imbert to pass Trujillo's car. They were less than twenty meters away, the wind was choking him, and Salvador did not take his eyes off the closed curtains on the back window. They would have to shoot blindly, riddle the entire seat with bullets. He prayed to God that the Goat was not accompanied by one of those unfortunate women he often took to his Mahogany House.

As if, suddenly, it had noticed that they were in pursuit, or as if its sporting instinct refused to let any other car pass, the Chevrolet Bel Air pulled ahead a few meters.

"Step on it, damn it," ordered Antonio de la Maza. "Faster, damn it!"

In a few seconds the Chevrolet Biscayne made up the distance and kept drawing closer. And the others? Why hadn't Pedro Livio and Huáscar Tejeda shown up? They were in the Oldsmobile—it also belonged to Antonio de la Maza—only a couple of kilometers away, and they should have intercepted Trujillo's car by now. Did Imbert forget to turn the headlights on and off three times in a row? Fifí Pastoriza in Salvador's old Mercury, waiting two kilometers beyond the Oldsmobile, had not appeared either. They already had driven two, three, four, or more kilometers. Where were they?

"You forgot the signals, Tony," shouted Turk. "We left Pedro Livio and Fifí behind."

They were about eight meters from Trujillo's car, and

Tony was trying to pass, flashing the headlights and blowing the horn.

"Step on it, faster!" roared Antonio de la Maza.

They drove even closer, but the Chevrolet Bel Air, indifferent to Tony's signals, would not leave the center of the highway. Where the hell was the Oldsmobile with Pedro Livio and Huáscar? Where was his Mercury with Fifí Pastoriza? Finally, Trujillo's car moved to the right. It left them enough room to pass.

"Step on it, step on it," Antonio de la Maza pleaded hysterically.

Tony Imbert accelerated and in a few seconds they were beside the Chevrolet Bel Air. The side curtains were also closed, so that Salvador did not see Trujillo, but he had a clear view, through the driver's window, of the heavy, coarse face of the famous Zacarías de la Cruz at the moment his eardrums seemed to burst with the explosion of simultaneous shots from Antonio and Amadito. The cars were so close that when the back window of the other automobile shattered, pieces of glass hit them and Salvador felt tiny stings on his face. As if he were having a hallucination, he saw Zacarías's head move in a strange way, and, a moment later, Salvador fired over Amadito's shoulder.

It did not last very long, and now—the squeal of the tires made his skin crawl—a violent braking left Trujillo's car behind them. Turning his head, he saw through the rear window that the Chevrolet Bel Air was swerving as if it would turn over before it came to a stop. It did not make a turn, it did not try to escape.

"Stop, stop!" Antonio de la Maza was shouting. "Put it in reverse, damn it!"

Tony knew what he was doing. He had braked at almost the same time as Trujillo's bullet-ridden car, but he took his foot off the brake when the vehicle gave a violent jolt, as if it were about to overturn, and then he braked again until the Chevrolet Biscayne stopped. Without wasting a second he turned the car—no other vehicle was coming—in the opposite

direction, and then drove toward Trujillo's automobile, which had stopped, absurdly, with its headlights on, less than a hundred meters away, as if it were waiting for them. When they had driven half the distance, the lights of the parked car turned off, but Turk could still see it in Tony Imbert's high beams.

"Heads down, get down," said Amadito. "They're going to shoot."

The glass in the window on his left shattered. Salvador felt pinpricks on his face and neck, and was thrown forward by the car's braking. The Biscayne screeched, swerved, drove off the road before it stopped. Imbert turned off the headlights. Everything was in darkness. Salvador heard shouts around him. When had he, Amadito, Tony, and Antonio jumped onto the highway? The four of them were out of the car, hiding behind the fenders and open doors, firing toward Trujillo's car, toward where it ought to be. Who was shooting at them? Was someone else with the Goat besides the driver? Because, no doubt about it, somebody was firing, the bullets resonated all around, chinked as they pierced the metal of the car, and had just wounded one of his friends.

"Turk, Amadito, cover us," said Antonio de la Maza. "Tony, let's finish it."

Almost at the same time—his eyes were beginning to make out profiles and silhouettes in the tenuous bluish light—he saw two crouching figures running toward Trujillo's automobile.

"Don't fire, Turk," said Amadito; with one knee on the ground, he aimed his rifle. "We have them. Keep an eye open. We don't want him to get past if he tries to run away."

For five, eight, ten seconds, the silence was absolute. As if in a nightmare, Salvador noticed that on the lane to his right, two cars were speeding toward Ciudad Trujillo. A moment later, another explosion of rifle and revolver fire. It lasted a few seconds. Then the booming voice of Antonio de la Maza filled the night:

"He's dead, damn it!"

He and Amadito began to run. Seconds later, Salvador

stopped, craned his head over the shoulders of Tony Imbert and Antonio de la Maza, who, one with a lighter and the other with matches, were examining the blood-soaked body dressed in olive green, the face destroyed, that lay on the asphalt in a puddle of blood. The Beast was dead. He did not have time to give thanks to God, he heard the sound of running and was certain he heard shots, there, behind Trujillo's car. Without thinking, he raised his revolver and fired, convinced they were *caliés* or military adjutants coming to the aid of the Chief, and very close by he heard the moans of Pedro Livio Cedeño, who had been hit by his bullets. It was as if the earth had opened up, as if, from the bottom of the abyss, he could hear the sound of the Evil One laughing at him.