

The First Day

MORNING: 5:00 A.M.—10:00 A.M.

One of those yellow-gold Roman mornings. A cloudless blue sky filled with that luminosity seen only here in the provinces of Latio and in the Cyclades. The sun giving that sheen of old burnished gold to the earth browns and the ochre facades of Rome's palazzi. Everything is still green up on the Pincio and in the Villa Borghese. Over in the Trastevere, the people are hanging out the bedsheets from the windows and calling down to the cafes and the itinerant coffee-vendors for their morning *cappuccino*. The sharp east wind that blows from the sea drops as the sun rises.

The night guards on duty at the *Domus Mariae* have just been relieved by the dawn shift. The day's supply of vegetables and meat is already being unloaded. "Eh beh!" the carter murmurs with quiet irreverence, "*che mangiano bene, i nostri illustrissimi principil Andiamol!*" (Well, may they eat well, our most illustrious princes. Let's go!) "*Mu andem!*" (Let's go!) his companion rejoins, as he swings into the driver's seat.

The three Cardinals whose rooms are on ground level with the Courtyard are awakened by the departing truck. Two of them turn over to sleep again. The third, Yiu, sits up and glances at his watch, decides to get up.

Inside the Conclave area, very little else is stirring. The young Monsignore's alarm clock rouses him at 5 o'clock sharp. He immediately telephones the priest-confessors. Then he gets ready for the day's work. By 6 o'clock he has said Mass, had some breakfast, and heads for the Camerlengo's office.

As he opens the door from the main corridor, he hears

the sound of voices from the Camerlengo's study. In a momentary decision, he knocks and enters: "Good morning, Eminence! May I bring you some coffee?"

The Camerlengo must have been up for at least two hours. Shaved and fully dressed, he is seated at his desk. Seated across from him are Cardinals Braun and Bronzino. The three glance up from their papers at the Monsignore's youthful face. On their laps, on the Camerlengo's desk, and on the side tables are scattered papers and documents and lists of figures. "The financial assessments" is the Monsignore's thought.

"We could all do with some coffee, Monsignore," the Camerlengo answers cheerily. Bronzino and Braun nod.

After he has delivered the coffee to the three Cardinals, the Monsignore receives some lists for typing. "By the way, Monsignore, we will be having some visitors. The names are on your desk. Admit them. But keep all others away for about one half hour . . ." A knock interrupts him. The door of the outer office opens. They hear some light, irregular footsteps, and the young Cardinal with the stutter appears smiling and fresh-faced in the doorway of the study.

"Aha! Good morning, Eminence!" the Camerlengo beams at him. The others present greet the young Cardinal cordially but with some obvious curiosity. "I have invited our young friend as an *amicus curiae*—which he has been, and is, in both senses of the term. You know, he's done a lot of private and confidential work for us over the years." Then to the Cardinal. "Come, come, Eminence! Have a seat. We were just starting." The other Cardinals sit down again, and the meeting resumes.

"Before our other friends arrive, let's get the picture straight." The Camerlengo unlocks one drawer in the desk, takes out a sheaf of typewritten papers, and places them at his right hand. "Here's how we'll do it. I have here unique copies of the financials for 1977-78 and the projected 1979 budget. The perspective of this report, as you will see, is very advantageous for us. The material is presented against the economic, social, and political background of the United States and Europe. I think, in this respect, the projections and analysis are excellent." Still talking, he passes the top sheet of his documents to Bronzino. "You will get the general picture anyway. All this material is *entre nous* for the moment.

"We start with the state of investments as of Fall 1977." All wait for the quick-eyed Bronzino to scan it. Bronzino is just checking it—he knows more about the subject than any Cardinal in the Conclave. He then passes it to Braun, who knows only some of the contents, and then receives the second page from the Camerlengo. In a few minutes the process is in full swing. Each time a sheet has passed through four pairs of hands, the last man puts it face down on the desk at the Camerlengo's left hand.

When this reading is over, he opens the desk drawer, places the documents inside, closes and locks the drawer, then leans his elbows on the desk and looks downward at his writing pad. All present now realize that the financial health of the Vatican depends on the health of the United States.

"Your Eminences, no doubt, can now appreciate the difficulty—and my attitudes."

"I can see more than a mere doctrinal danger in the Progressivist move," Bronzino comments.

"I thought," the Camerlengo goes on, "that I could explain all this to him—to Thule, I mean—and thus cut off the movement at the pass."

"And?" Braun's query.

"Oh! He seemed to see the hand of God or something like that in all of it." A pause. "The hand of God, if you please."

"Now, how much of all this do we explain shortly to our friends?"

"All of it, but in general terms. Enough so they understand the gravity of any cutting away from the *General Policy Framework*, and/or from close identification with Washington." He looks up earnestly: "We present it always as a temporary measure, of course! Temporary." The others nod. The office door opens. The young Monsignore appears.

"Our friends are here?" the Camerlengo inquires, his voice carrying to the outer office. "Yes, come in, Eminences! Come in!" The Asiatic is the first. "My Lord Yiu, how good of you! Good morning, Pietro!" Masaccio is obviously in his well-known, smiling, morning good humor. He greets Lowe, Lohngren, and Vasari with equal warmth. "You all know each other." The Monsignore brings in some folding chairs, opens them, and all sit down.

"Now my friends, this is, as you know, the usual pre-

Session briefing for presumed candidates. And I thought our colleagues here . . ." looking at Braun and Bronzino and Lohngren and the young Cardinal, "would be able to help us to get rapidly and thoroughly through it all." He very correctly reminds the small group that the purpose of this briefing, which has been a Conclave practice since early in this century, is not so much to prepare the *papabili* to step, possibly, into the previous Pope's shoes, as it is to give them an idea of the economic and financial factors that govern the Church's actions in various parts of the world—religious, diplomatic, and political as well as ecclesiastical actions. He looks at the Monsignore. "Monsignore will distribute some work sheets to you all which summarize our position and the facts as this Office sees them." The Camerlengo always refers to himself as "the Office," or "this Office." The papers are distributed to the four *papabili* and to the others.

The Camerlengo looks at his copy. "I think everything is clear here."

There is a silence for a couple of minutes, as the Cardinals run through the materials. Cardinal Braun is complimented on the year's contributions from the Catholics in his home diocese. Lowe wants to know how much the Sindona affair cost the Vatican. But Bronzino and the Camerlengo "fudge" on this point. The documents reflect the huge transfer of stocks and property investments from Europe to the United States which the Vatican undertook in the late sixties.

"Then, my Brothers, this is the situation," Yiu says as he lays down his papers. "Any sharp veering away from political and diplomatic alignment with the Atlantic side will endanger our acceptability there; and there, precisely, we have sunk our major interests. Is that the conclusion?"

"More or less. There are nuances, of course." Bronzino is careful. "But that can be taken as a good summary."

"It seems to me, if that is fixed policy," now it is the young Cardinal who speaks, "then anything outside an Italian pro-Curial candidate—or a pan-European candidate acceptable to the Curia—anything outside those two possibilities is ruled out unless we wish to court high danger. And who would want to do that?"

The Camerlengo flings down his pencil in an emotional outburst. "Exactly! That is why, Eminences! That is clearly why some form of the *General Policy* is advisable. I have

been saying this to everyone." Instinctively all turn and look at Yiu. No one of them speaks. Yiu looks up, and grimaces as he talks. He is the one *papabile* here who, in the Camerlengo's terms, is unacceptable.

"As if that were the only reason against my candidacy, Brothers! Let's be frank and realistic! There is also my age, you know that. And my skin-color. Oh, yes! It matters; and don't act as if it didn't. Can you imagine what the Italian Communists and Latin American dynasties would say if the Pope were a little yellow man? And my country's regime! Isn't it a factor too? But don't worry. I will not ever be put in nomination successfully. Don't worry!"

"But we have to worry, Eminence," the Camerlengo chides him paternally. "We have to be realistic. And . . ." glancing around, "we all know what Eastern fury can accomplish!" The reference to Thule causes no amusement.

"Understood!" Yiu says cryptically. "Understood! Don't worry!"

"Well then," the Camerlengo rises, his aim obviously accomplished with Yiu's assurance, "if we have finished I am sure we all have things to do before 9 o'clock Mass. I want to thank you all, Eminences! Thanks very, very much. My mind is relieved."

As they troop out, the Camerlengo signals to the young Cardinal to stay. In the confidential work the young Cardinal has done for him and the Vatican, he has shown real promise, this young man. The Camerlengo knows what an important experience this Conclave could be for him. If he can give him a bit of guidance, he will—and happily.

"My friend," he confides, "we do, of course, have an alternative plan—should an anti-U.S. Pope be elected and it become imperative to cut the Atlantic knot. But I wasn't going to talk about that now, nor were Bronzino or Braun. They are *au courant*, of course. Lohngren knows nothing. We would only take such a recourse and follow that alternate plan if it is decided to ride down to the bottom of the trough—I mean really go poor with the Third World."

"But who would decide that the whole machine should, as you say, ride to the bottom of the trough?"

The young Cardinal's question is natural enough, perhaps. But in its attempt to draw him out, the Camerlengo finds it out of character for the younger man. His eyes narrow for one tiny moment. Then his face clears and he smiles indulgently. "You, young man, are too young to

hear all these dreadful secrets! Go on! Let me get back to my work. I will never finish it in time. Peace!"

The Cardinal goes out through the outer office, bows his head to the young Monsignore and passes on out into the corridor. The Monsignore rises and goes in to see the Camerlengo. "If I didn't know better, Eminence," he says in that irreverent tone that a trusted servant uses with a master, "I would say the Cardinal didn't find out and is still puzzling about something vital."

The Camerlengo, who is writing busily, does not raise his head. The Monsignore knows his manner, and he waits. A small wry smile appears at the corner of the older man's mouth. Still bowed over his writing pad, he stops writing, glances up under his eyebrows at the Monsignore. The gleam in his eyes is a telltale sign of his inner self. He looks down again at the line of writing where he has stopped, says very curtly: "The old dog for the long road, and the pup for the puddle, as they used to say in Beham." And he starts writing again. The reference to his native town strikes the Monsignore as peculiar. The Camerlengo never refers to it or to any personal matter when talking with his subordinates. Retirement?—the Monsignore asks himself as he leaves his boss. And then another question to himself: Do any of us ever really grow up? Or ever cease to be little boys from such and such a little place where our hearts remain always?

By 6 o'clock, Domenico, too, has said his Mass and had some coffee. He is back in his apartment when Yiu appears at the door. He has come directly from the meeting at the Camerlengo's office. Domenico waves his hand airily when Yiu apologizes for the early hour. "It is not early for me, Eminence, I assure you. Not early at all!" He looks at Yiu's stony face. "I guess one thing: You have been approached." Yiu nods.

"Thule?" Yiu nods.

"Nomination or . . ." Yiu nods.

"Before or after the *Policy* vote?"

"After." Yiu barely opens his mouth. His eyes are narrow slits.

"Did you consent explicitly to be put in nomination?"

"His Eminence took it that such was the case."

Domenico smiles slightly at this answer of Yiu's. He

can just imagine the scene. Two kinds of Westerners talk or try to talk with Orientals, Domenico thinks briefly. Those who think they know what Oriental silences and brevity mean. And those who know they do not know.

"Very well, Eminence. Here's what's going to happen. You will be nominated by Thule—probably in the Second Session. He will have to put forth a policy for his candidate first of all. He must do that in the First Session and get it passed. Then he will nominate you in the Second Session. Angelico has been asked to second the proposal. He will rise to speak . . . but he will not second. . . ."

"Won't?" Yiu's eyebrows rise.

"No. Then when Thule and his supporters realize their failure to carry Angelico's support, there will probably be an attempt to rush your renomination and the seconding. It's an old Conclave trick, by the way, and Thule will know it is his best chance. Sit tight. Never refuse directly and explicitly. Above all, don't speak unless you have to. No matter what the temptation to do so. Or the irritation! Make difficulties. But don't get mixed up in the melee."

Yiu looks at Domenico, then rises. "Ni Kan should be told." Yiu and Ni Kan are close friends.

"Ni Kan knows."

At 6:45 A.M., Angelico telephones Domenico. Thule has spent ten minutes with Angelico before going on to say his private Mass. Angelico is worried, and cannot wait to tell Domenico.

"His Eminence, Thule, was with me just now," he says, the moment that Domenico answers.

"And?"

"He asked me to second Yiu's nomination, and to unite the Radicals with his group. And I said yes."

"You agreed! Why?"

"To gain time. Wishing to gain time."

"But if you said 'no,' he'd be stymied for another hour or two and into the morning Session."

"I don't think so. There are others. Or, at least one other."

"Marquez?"

"Yes. He would be one. So my saying 'yes' now at least holds him up from seeking out someone else surer than

me." There is silence between them, as Domenico turns over the various alternatives.

Angelico is the first to break the silence. "Can we risk letting it go to a policy vote in the First Session?" His fear is that Thule will be successful in getting the Conclave to approve of his policy. Once that happens the *papabile* elected would be sworn to implement that policy.

"It'll be a near thing," Domenico comments.

"How near?"

"Too near for peace of mind! But not disastrously near—at least that's what I think. I think I can always break it."

"Even a rush?"

"Yes. I think so. Yes, yes. It's always a gamble. But, otherwise, we will never scotch the 'Thule movement.' It can go on and on even after the Conclave."

"Well then. . . ."

"No. We'll let it go. As we said."

"And then?"

"Register to speak at the beginning of the Second Session," Domenico tells Angelico. "Depending on what happens in the First Session, we'll decide what to do later in the Second."

"But, Father, supposing it all goes fast in the First Session, and I am called upon to second a rush nomination?"

"It won't come to that. I have checked. There are at least six scheduled speakers, main speakers. Thule is last. Don't worry. We'll only get to the *Policy* vote."

"You yourself are not speaking, Father?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I want that rope to be as long as it possibly can be. We have some heavy bodies to hang on it. The longer, the surer, the cockier, the more detailed in their explanations they become, the longer and stronger that rope will be."

"What about the Camerlengo?"

"Until he sees, finally, that his *General Policy* is in ruins, he won't even begin to come around." As Angelico is about to reply, Domenico interrupts. Someone is knocking at his door. "Eminence, go and say your Mass. And pray well. We will talk later."

Domenico's visitors are Eakins and Lohngren.

"Eminences! Come in!"

"We have celebrated Mass already, Eminence, as you did yourself." Lohngren knows Domenico's habits.

"May we have a moment of your time?" Now it is Eakins who speaks, smiling.

"Hah! Your American politeness. Remember it was I who phoned you at the ungodly hour of 5:30 this morning!" The three sit down. Domenico wastes no time. "Eminences, the brute fact is that the pan-European proposal is stillborn." He pauses. Eakins' face has dropped. Lohngren closes his mouth tight, then asks an important question.

"How?"

"Simple. You North Americans are divided," he says to Eakins. "Sargent will go with Vasari and the Traditionalists, as will Braun. You know that. They didn't really change."

"But Calder and . . ."

"Calder went along on condition that Terebelski assured them of Karewski, Bonkowski, Kand, Franzus, and some others; and as long as you, Eminence," he means Lohngren, "could bring the other Germans—and now you cannot be sure of them, can you? And as long as your friend, Marsellais could deliver you the French." Marsellais again, Bishop of Louon, President of the European Bishops' Conference, the all-powerful Pope-maker in non-Italian Europe. His name figures in every strategy vote count. "Now, Marsellais cannot deliver, will not or does not deliver. I don't know which. Anyway, he's changed."

"In what direction?"

"Thule et al."

"And the Spaniards?"

"In the middle. In the middle, Eminences!"

"But in a first balloting, we can still make a strong showing and follow that up later with . . ."

"I doubt it—your strong showing. But even if you did, the tide is turning. You see, the linchpin is this: If the *General Policy* is dead—and I think that there can be no doubt it is, by the way—" the others nod glumly, "then your solution is next: i.e., let's have a non-Italian, a European candidate. And, then, a later Conclave can proceed to a non-European. Now that's a lovely idea. But what on earth indicates to you that the Africans want a European? Why should they? And the Latin Americans? Why should they accept anything from capitalist Europe?"

"Oh no, Eminences! If from the beginning you openly

discountenanced the *General Policy* by suggesting your pan-European solution, you have cancelled the need for the whole first half of Thule's argument before he says a word. You open the door wide and you fall right into the hands of Thule and the Progressivists! For you have no candidate or policy they will accept once you open that door. And they have both, ready and willing and easy, or so they think."

Eakins looks at Lohngren, then back to Domenico. "Why has Terebelski changed? After all, there were commitments."

"And still are, Eminence!" Domenico answers realistically. "But when the conditions under which commitments are made have changed, the commitments fall to pieces—you know that!" Eakins still has something on his mind. Domenico knows how to wait.

Lohngren looks at him then at Eakins: "I think, Eminence, you had better explain a little about the pan-European proposal." Eakins waits awhile, then turns around to Domenico.

"Eminence, the plan was a little more complicated than would appear at first sight. The entire exercise of forming a pan-European bloc was not really meant to get a non-Italian elected. It was conceived originally to freeze a bloc of votes so that they would go neither to My Lord Angelico nor to My Lord Thule's side. Neither to the Radicals nor the Progressivists. The plan was meant to sow so much divisiveness in these two groups, that the Conservatives would be the strongest alternative."

"The delayed action, eh?" Domenico understands the old political game. "Having beaten down any Thule putsch and skeletized any support for Angelico, then the pan-European candidate on being nominated would refuse categorically and throw his support behind . . ." Domenico thrusts his head forward like a hawk seeking prey, "behind whom, Eminence?"

There is an awkward silence. Domenico remains tense for a few more seconds, then relaxes and looks at the lists of Electors that lie on his desk. A half minute passes before he speaks. His tone is sepulchral and quiet.

"I see a very dark hand, a very long and dark hand, stretching out of the labyrinthine folds, all velvet, all silent, all smooth, reaching out and getting a stranglehold on whatever initiative there is for renewal, for good, for fresh

hope. And I am speaking of God's people, in that last phrase, Eminences." He looks up and smiles a little grimly at the other two, then looks down again. He lifts a sheet of paper off his desk, reads a little then drops it. "Such plotting and planning is sad, Eminences. Very sad.

"And I will tell you how sad. It's sad because, first of all, it has failed before it could even spring. It failed. The plan is bankrupt. Thule has you surrounded.

"It's sad, secondly, because as you know better than I do, those bishops outside who know of your plot have had their hopes raised—they expect huge liberalizations, huge changes. But bearable changes. But they are not so clever at maneuvering as you. They believe in your alternative. Not as a plot, but for its own sake. Now can you imagine their chagrin when you are beaten, so to speak? When you, Eminence, shoo in somebody like Vasari or Ferro, who is anathema to those bishops? Can you imagine what is going to happen? And what damage do you think Thule and his Progressivist theologians are going to do after the Conclave? Can you imagine? Have you foreseen all that? No! You didn't stop to think!"

"Then what alternatives are there?" Eakins' question.

"Alternatives! Alternatives! Alternatives! I hear nothing but that word and question from those who have gone around for a couple of years blithely forging their own very private and miserable alternatives! Alternatives?" Domenico is almost laughing in a sardonic way, but his innate kindness stops him short of it.

Lohngren takes up. "And so, Eminence? Now? Right now"—looking at his watch—"in approximately three hours, what?"

"This, simply this. Let Thule run, as far, as fast, as explicit, as outrageous, as presumptuous as he can and as he wishes."

"But that will mean certain death for the *General Policy*, and *then*?"

"No." Domenico is almost reproving in his response. "Come, come! We can have no false hopes. We must serve Jesus better. We all know that the *General Policy* is dead already. That's a fact. It only remains to put that fact on display."

"So what do we do?"

"Pray, Eminence, pray! And when the time comes, use your heads. The Second Session will be crucial."

Eakins looks at him. "Eminence, whatever happens, we will not support any move in Angelico's direction. For Angelico means a whole host of things we have fought against."

"I know. I know." Domenico looks at him. "I know, Eminence. But why did you set yourself up as the executioner of Capovero and the others? And why tag along with the anti-Paul group?" Dom Dino Capovero, one of Pope Paul 6's personal assistants, had been, with his close associates, in constant clash with Eakins and his supporters. A whole army of powerful Vatican officials wanted Angelico's head. For Angelico was hated for much.

"But," Domenico concludes, "this is not a time for vendettas, or for mutual backscratching. The times are critical."

But Eakins is not satisfied. He starts again to ask Domenico if another way cannot be found to make a genuine pan-European candidacy viable. Eakins still fears an Angelico movement.

Domenico looks at him for a moment, his eyes narrowing, then he uses a cold, lofty tone of voice. "Eminence! Look at it like this. Your home city is a very big, very rich, very fast, very powerful city and diocese. It is a very big political center. You have ample there to occupy you. When you come here, remember that you can in no way introduce any interests other than Rome's—even if those other interests coincide with Rome's. None of us finally can be messenger boys for anyone. Just messengers of Jesus, our Lord." There is no word from Eakins. But his face has no pleasantry in its look.

Lohngren stands up. Eakins follows suit. "I suppose it will be the Second or even the Third Session?" Lohngren asks.

"The vote on a candidate? Yes. One of the two. The *Policy* vote will probably be in the First Session. Let's pray and work. Good morning, Eminences!"

When Eakins and Lohngren leave Domenico, he crosses to his desk and telephones. "Eminence?" He is speaking to Riccioni now. "Have you got a few moments . . . ? At 7:30? Very well. Here? Fine! Thanks!" He hangs up.

When Riccioni arrives, it is obvious that he has had a bad night. And a short night's sleep. He is very pale. And his expression is one of profound distress.

"I don't know what to tell you, Eminence," he begins

to Domenico once they are seated together. "Everything seems to be crumbling around us. What are we to do? Go into schism? It's as bad as that, at times it really seems so. Last night, it was obvious that Thule was digging his feet in. This morning, I was over with the Americans—Braun and Bronzino were there, too—and it is obvious that any collapse of the *General Policy* is going to mean a danger to our long-range investment plans. I wouldn't mind that so much, if it didn't also entail honeymooning with non-Catholics and Marxists."

"Eminence," Domenico says gently, "the *General Policy* is as dead as the dodo. Start from there."

"But where do we go from *there*, Brother? To cap it all, it seems that Lombardi is heading a fission among the Italians. Incredible! Incredible!"

Lombardi is a foreign-born Italian. At fifty-seven years old, he has climbed rapidly from simple priest to Bishop to Cardinal and Prefect of a Roman Congregation. Lombardi is suspected by many to be too liberal—and certainly too young for any responsibility.

"Not incredible at all! We already know they are split!" Domenico rejoins.

"So we are faced with a huge, yawning chasm of heterodoxy, Protestantism, secularization of the Liturgy—as if we hadn't gone far enough already. And politization of the Church in the name of the proletarian revolution! *Dio!* It's too much. We've got to do *something*." Riccioni is looking into the middle distance and speaking, as it were, to the ceiling.

"Eminence," Domenico still speaks gently, "I share all your distress. But the solution does not lie in our losing our presence of mind or going hog-wild." Riccioni's temper is well-known. Domenico needs to be certain that he himself will retain control of events in the crucial Sessions coming up.

"I know. I'm inclined to go hog-wild. I see red. *Dio!* I see red in another sense!" exclaims Riccioni.

"Now, Eminence, we are not there yet. And you know that as well as I do."

"But, Domenico, have you seen or heard of the plan—I mean Thule's plan for a new International Council of Theologians who would function with the Pope and the *Congregation for the Faith* and with the Bishops' *Synod*,

and which would not be merely consultative but could lay down doctrinal regulations? Have you seen that plan?"

"Yes," Domenico says quietly. "I've seen it. It stinks." One of Thule's pet projects has been the creation of a permanent body of theologians meeting every year for a couple of months in Rome. The members would be appointed by the bishops around the world. There would be 12 permanent members drawn from Protestant churches who would not be mere observers: They would participate in the proceedings. The Council would be a legislative body: The Pope would be obliged *ex officio* to follow its majority rulings.

"Can you imagine what Küng, what Dulles, what Schillebeeckx and all the others would do in that Council?" Riccioni asks in horror. "And the permanent Protestant members?"

"Eminence, look!" Domenico remonstrates and soothes the old Cardinal. "We all know that Küng and Dulles and Curran and Schillebeeckx and the others are more Protestant than Catholic. They and many others are close to heresy in matters such as the Incarnation, the Trinity, priestly celibacy, sexual morality, and so on. But we can deal with them, Eminence. We can manage them. We can salvage what is good. We can reject and expel the rest. Do not worry on that score. . . ."

"But beyond all that, what about the Marxization of the Church? I always said Montini's *Ostpolitik* was crazy. I told Roncalli (Pope John 23) that he was wrong. I've been saying so for years to Montini and Casaroli and Silvestrini and all the other intellectual greyhounds at the Secretariat."

"We have moral imperatives," Domenico says reprovingly, "to seek justice and peace in the world." His voice has hardened ever so slightly. "We cannot and should not stop talking to each and every government, be they non-Catholic or Communist or what-not. Do you want us to retire from the world? Of course not, Eminence! What's bothering you is bothering me. It is the *way* in which all this is being done. . . ."

"Precisely!" Riccioni is on fire again. "Precisely, Eminence. The way in which we do it. Have we no alternative?"

"Oh no! Not that again!" Domenico says in mock horror flinging up his hands in protest. "Every one of you comes in through that door crying about alternatives. What have

you been doing all this time, Eminence? Why haven't you developed an alternative?"

"We have! We have!" Riccioni is off again. "The age old doctrine. A return to . . ."

"No, Eminence." Domenico is calm again. "No! What you must get into your head is that there is no going back. You cannot. We cannot. The Church cannot. No going back."

"Then we'll fight. Every inch of the way. Every minute of every hour of every day. For months, if necessary!"

"And how long would you really last, Riccioni?" Domenico becomes harsh in tone. "Tell me, how many of you are there? Have you anyone you can really rely upon? In the Conclave, I mean. And today? This morning? How many?"

"Well, there's myself. There's Dowd, Nolasco, Braun, Maderno, Pozzo, Duccio, Vasari, Lamennais, Carracci, Walker, Houdon, Bronzino"—Riccioni falters—"and that's only the beginning."

"You name twelve. I'm not sure even of all of them. But, for argument's sake, let's go on. How many more? Ten more? Twenty more?" Riccioni's response is silence. He unfolds his arms and looks at Domenico for a long moment. When he speaks, he is subdued in tone. Even in all his fury and temperament, he does see.

"What do you counsel, Domenico?"

"First of all, we must not panic. For this reason I want to ask you a favor, Riccioni. Please! Do not make a major speech. Harass them all you want. Interrupt them. Counsel against them in private. Heckle them. But in public session do not, I repeat, do not, make any major speech."

"Why not, Domenico? Why should . . ."

"Because, when you start, you are like a red rag to a bull. You simply rub most of them the wrong way. And they immediately want to oppose you. Pardon me, Eminence! But that is the fact, is it not?"

Riccioni nods mournfully, but says nothing.

"So," Domenico repeats. "Harass them! Harangue them with one-liners. Applaud at the right time! Yawn. Do what you can. But no major speeches."

Riccioni is quiet again, for a little while. Then he speaks in a very resigned tone. "Very well, Domenico. But you know what galls me and what I cannot understand? Well, the Camerlengo and company here have been flirting with

Masaccio for almost two years now. And you know, if Masaccio got the election, the Camerlengo and his friends would be the first to go. Between Masaccio and myself there is more than a small difference. Yet, they cannot see that they are safer with us, with me, with the Traditionalist bloc. We won't boot them out!"

"Masaccio and the Conservatives have almost as small a chance as your Eminence—I mean your Eminence's ideas—of prevailing. Look! These things are not predictions; it's just what is *going* to happen. The fact is that a vast change has taken place *out there* in the Church. In the *people* of the Church, I mean. That is the Church, you know! Neither the Conservative nor Traditionalist plan will correspond with the reality of that change. Now, here comes Thule and Franzus and Buff and Lombardi and Marquez and all the others—the young Turks!—with a different plan. And screaming the house down that they know what is going on!"

"Do they?" Riccioni asks incredulously. Domenico pauses and looks away. He thinks.

"Yes and no," he says finally. "Yes and no. They certainly see what causes our problems—the big change. I don't think they understand that change. And I find their solution is social and political rubbish and—in terms of what Jesus' Church should be—dangerous stupidity. But they do see the change."

"May the good Lord Jesus, Lord of all, save our Church!" Riccioni says as he rises. His short prayer is sincere and fervent. He stands for a moment looking at the floor. Then: "I will do as you suggest. But, how long must we so temporize?"

"As long as is necessary to create a strong hanging-halter." Domenico's lifeless tone emphasizes his meaning.

Riccioni shoots a quick glance at him. "Should I speak to Masaccio?" he asks Domenico.

"No, I've been on the phone with him. He's all right. He understands. He's better now than he was last night. He's all right, Eminence!" Domenico glances at his watch. "In five minutes the bell is going to ring for the Mass of the Holy Spirit. A crucial day begins." Riccioni understands that Domenico is still asking if he can rely on Riccioni's staying under control.

"Domenico!" Riccioni has regained his peace and some

measure of confidence. "Let's go and give a good account of ourselves."

"Right, Eminence!" Domenico rejoins warmly. "Right!" He smiles. "Haven't you Venetian fishermen a phrase that covers a dark dawn that will be followed by a brilliant day?"

Riccioni's old good humor rises. "No dark day in Venice is followed by brilliance of sunshine. If we start off bad, we are bad to the end!"

"Let's go, Riccioni! God Bless!"

It is 8:45 A.M., and the bell is ringing for the Mass of the Holy Spirit in the House Chapel. This morning, it is the Camerlengo who will be the celebrant. All the Cardinals are supposed to attend, unless their health forbids it.

Across in the other wing of the Conclave area, the caucus of the Latin American Cardinals is just breaking up. It has been held in the apartment of Teofilo. Present there also were Zubaran, Hildebrandt, Ribera, Gris, and the young Cardinal with the stutter.

At the bell, they disperse quickly. Some return to their rooms on their way to the Chapel. Others go straight to the Chapel.

The young Cardinal goes back to his room, ostensibly to pick up his prayer book and some notes. He automatically fingers the ruby on his pectoral cross. This seems a habitual and frequent gesture of his. He reflects. This is not the best of mornings for the Cardinal. He had a dream this morning just before awakening—or so it seems to him now. One of those repetitive nagging dreams. He cannot remember its sequence—if it had any. All he can recall now is a skewed perspective in which something delicate and beautiful—a butterfly, a moth—flowing in many colors landed on his hand or near him in some intimate way. He has a lingering sensation in his memory of fire and crumpling wings, melting colors. It is all he can remember. But the sense of loss is deep. He hurries down to the Chapel.

Inside, except for Patti and Morris—both feeling unwell this morning—all the Cardinal Electors are kneeling. The Camerlengo has begun celebrating the Mass. An air of tranquility and unison pervades the Chapel. As the young Cardinal slips into the nearest pew, he finds himself beside Reynolds of Oceania. Some emotion, unbidden, and un-

controlled but not violent, wells up in him. And right through the Mass, it stays present with him, like the voice of a gentle visitor asking to be admitted.

As the other Electors recite the Mass prayers, he joins in sporadically. Each time he says any of those words out loud, he feels that the great granite millstone time has been for him up to this moment is now melting. The arched Chapel itself becomes like a flimsy kite flying skyward into the unknown. And all its occupants are become in some disturbing way unknown and alien to him. And the sanctuary with the Camerlengo celebrating at the Altar is a vault of dreams burned by the fire from the Altar candles and the two flickering red sanctuary lamps permanently lit on either side. He fingers that ruby on his pectoral cross and remembers again the Embassy reception three months ago where he was feted and congratulated, then introduced into the Ambassador's private quarters. There they presented him with the heavily bejeweled pectoral cross. "It is special," the Ambassador had said. "Later we will explain about it." They had explained. Dim snatches from his memory of this early morning's dream float down his consciousness and mingle with a new sense of regret for what was done by him, and by what he is bound to do.

Only when the Camerlengo turns around at the end of Mass, only then does the Cardinal return to himself fully. It is 9:40 A.M. As he rises and genuflects, he takes in the Altar and the pews and the wall frescoes and the Cardinals around him shuffling out. Again that feeling of the alien, the being not-at-home any longer. Once, all such things and people used to be near him, intimately near as a veil of holy air, as the intangible joy of holy fire. Now he sees them as far off or, maybe, it is he himself who is far off. He turns his back and with the others makes his way to the main door and the busses.

THE FIRST SESSION

In his temporary office off the Upper Room, the Camerlengo waits until the young Monsignore comes for him. Outside, most of the Electors are chatting while they wait for the warning bell announcing the First Session. There is an air of anticipation and camaraderie. But many are exchanging little confidences, passing words of advice, assess-