

Part One: A Trabajar / Get to Work

Chapter Twelve

Ignacio explained that "La Gallega" is where he has lived for the past 3 years. Ybor City had many boarding houses that catered to single men, mostly Spaniards, but this one had earned the reputation of being the best. He had arranged for Fernando and him to share one of the larger rooms. Zapato gestured to Gaitero to pass through the small gate.

As the two men walked onto the porch Fernando could hear the loud din of many people speaking simultaneously, both in Spanish and Galician. Passing through the front door, they were greeted by an incredibly good aroma of food, accented with the sweetness of fine Cuban leaf cigars.

They entered a single large room running the full width of the building. To the right was a sitting area. On the left was a large dining area with several long tables. Every chair was occupied. As they became available, other diners would emerge from the sitting area and claim them. The vast majority of those eating were men. Ignacio explained

that most were permanent boarders, while others were there just for lunch. Many of the men were wearing high-collared, long-sleeved white shirts, and ties. Several servers were dashing in and out of a kitchen located at the rear of the dining room, carrying steaming bowls and platters of copious amounts of food. Fernando realized that he was very hungry.

"Sígueme, Gaitero. Quiero presentarte a los dueños. Son una pareja encantadora. Muy buena gente".

Ignacio told Fernando to follow him, as he wanted to introduce him to the owners of La Gallega, of whom he was very fond. He assured his friend that they were a charming couple.

Zapato guided Fernando through the crowded room, exchanging greetings with those they passed. They entered the kitchen. There was a frenzy of activity....workers dashing about, quickly ladling food from large pots to waiting bowls and plates. A rather large but well-proportioned woman seemed to be in charge, monitoring all that was happening. She appeared to be in her forties. Ignacio approached her.

"Maruxa, te quiero presentar a Fernando Suárez Menéndez, mi mejor amigo. También es de Candamo. Gaitero, esta señora es Maruxa Varela, conocida como 'La Gallega'. Y Aniceto, donde está?"

He had introduced Maruxa to his best friend, explaining Gaitero was also from Candamo in Asturias. She was well-known as "La Gallega" (the Galician woman) and the boarding house bore her nickname. Zapato wondered where her husband and business partner, Aniceto, might be.

"Non outro asturiano! Eu quería outro galego. Pero está ben, deixáremosche quedar!
Bienvenido, home novo."

In her native Galician language, she had warmly welcomed Fernando to his new home. He was familiar enough with the language to understand her. Yielding to the traditional friendly "competition" between Galicians and their next-door neighbors, the Asturians, Maruxa had jokingly expressed disappointment that he was yet another Asturian and not Galician! She embraced both Spaniards with hugs and the usual kisses on each cheek. Zapato handed her the three loaves of bread he had purchased. She smiled broadly and gave him an extra hug. This was his usual Friday afternoon gift to Maruxa, for her personal enjoyment. She particularly relished the shorter, more familiar loaf.....a "barra gallega", the Galician loaf typical of her homeland.

"Ahora, a comer!"

Maruxa, switching to Spanish, had announced that now it was time to eat, nudging the young men toward the dining room as she took Gaitero's satchel and placed it in a corner of the kitchen.

Fernando and Ignacio took their seats. It was now just before two o'clock in the afternoon, and they looked forward to what is traditionally the largest meal of the day for Spaniards. As Fernando glanced around the room, he allowed his nose, ears, and eyes to fully process what surrounded him. Through a large window in front of him, he saw a very large tree. It appeared to be a type of oak whose enormous branches were beautifully draped with large clumps of a long, wispy, grey plant. He had never before seen such a thing. He found it strangely beautiful and fascinating. It was, at this moment, his only reminder that he was no longer in Spain.

Chapter Thirteen

Fernando and Ignacio feasted on wonderfully familiar food. Because it was Friday, no meat was offered. While many of the immigrant Spaniards had abandoned the rigid doctrines of the Catholic church, they still embraced many of its cultural manifestations. A huge basket of freshly baked bread was on each table. An "empanada gallega", the Galician meat pie of tuna and sweet peppers was the appetizer. A green salad was followed by a hearty Basque codfish stew, "bacalao a

la vizcaina". "Arroz con leche", an Asturian-style rice pudding, made for a delicious dessert. "Café con leche", Cuban coffee with boiled milk, ended the feast. Ignacio and Fernando agreed that Maruxa had been very ecumenical in her choice of offerings, either purposely or by accident. The menu was a perfect sampling of the most iconic foods of Spain's northwestern Atlantic coast, the "Green Spain" from which so many of her boarders had emigrated.

Zapato and Gaitero retreated to the sitting area which was now mostly empty. Most of the diners had returned to work. They relished this opportunity to get reacquainted after nearly four years of separation and minimal communication. They had last seen each other on the docks of Havana when Ignacio boarded the Olivette, Mascotte's "sister ship", for his voyage to Tampa. Ignacio noticed that Fernando's eyes were filling with tears.

"Zapato, parece mentira que marchamos de la tierrina solos, cuando éramos rapacines...nada más catorce años.....pensando que ya éramos hombres! Queríamos evitar a servir el rey. Y sabiendo que probablemente más nunca veríamos a nuestros padres. Si me cierro los ojos veo la fiesta de despedida que nos dieron la noche antes. Nuestras familias escondieron su tristeza. El día que nos fuimos, después de la foto, mi madre me abrazó y me besó. Después ella

entró a la casa, negándose a salir de nuevo. Ella no quería verme alejar de la casa por la última vez."

Gaitero had very poignantly reminisced to Zapato about their departure from Spain...expressing amazement that they were only young boys of fourteen years of age. They, like so many others, wanted to avoid "serving the king"...a reference to the military draft. He closed his eyes, thinking about the "farewell party" the two families had given for the two boys, while hiding their sadness.

The regions of Asturias and Galicia are traditionally culturally and ethnically Celtic, as opposed to Mediterranean. One manifestation of this was the giving of a farewell party to "celebrate" the departure of emigrants, a tradition well known in Ireland. In reality these were, more often than not, sad occasions. In that island nation to the north of Spain they were called "American wakes". On the day of departure, families would pose for a photograph...an extravagance at the time. Traditionally, these were taken outside. Fernando commented how, after his family's photograph was taken, his mother pulled him toward her, embracing him strongly and kissing his face numerous times. She then quickly entered the house, refusing to come out again. She did not want to see her young son walk away for the last time.

Ignacio was both moved and surprised by the depth and intensity of Fernando's nostalgia. He would have expected this from someone much older than they. He shared his friend's sentimentalities, but somehow Gaitero's verbalization of them evoked a homesickness he had never before felt. He steered the conversation toward the present.

"Pues mira, Gaitero. Tengo muy buena noticia. El encargado de contratar en la fábrica de puros donde trabajo ha accedido hablar contigo el lunes. Quizás puedes trabajar allí. La fábrica se llama Sanchez y Haya, una de las más grande en Tampa. Ya hace tres años que estoy allí, y ahora soy fabricante de puros. Gano un buen salario."

Ignacio explained that for the last three years he was working at a cigar factory called Sánchez & Haya, the first and one of the larger ones in Tampa. He had worked his way up to being a cigar maker, and was earning a good salary. The manager in charge of hiring had agreed to meet with Fernando on Monday, and perhaps there was a job for him.

"Zapato, tanto lo agradezco! Por supuesto, hablaré con él el lunes."

Fernando smiled and expressed his deep gratitude to Ignacio for his effort. He would certainly speak with the manager.

Gaitero suddenly realized that he was extremely tired after the overnight boat ride. Even at his young age, the lack of proper sleep had taken its toll. It was now early evening, and he was ready for a good night's sleep. He asked Ignacio to please escort him to their room.

Chapter Fourteen

Ignacio agreed that it had been a long and busy day for Fernando.

"Espera aquí. Voy a encontrar a tu maleta".

Zapato graciously told his friend to relax and he would locate his suitcase for him. He remembered that Maruxa had put it on the floor in a corner of the kitchen.

Entering the kitchen, he saw Aniceto meticulously cleaning the room after the late afternoon meal. Ignacio explained that their new guest was headed for bed. Aniceto smiled, with an understanding nod. He retrieved the satchel and handed it to Zapato.

"Dile que duerma bien. Mañana conoceré el chaval."

Aniceto asked Ignacio to wish Fernando a good night's sleep, and that he would meet the young man the next day.

Returning to the sitting room with the satchel, Ignacio found his friend sound asleep in his chair. He gently awakened Fernando and nudged him toward the stairway. Their room was on the third floor. When they entered, Gaitero was very impressed to see electric lightbulbs illuminating the room. While Havana certainly had availed itself of this modern invention, it was still largely limited to the homes and businesses of the wealthy. He gestured toward the light bulbs in the ceiling.

"Zapato, me siento como un rey! Parece mentira que nosotros podemos disfrutar un lujo como esto."

Fernando told Ignacio that he felt like a king...it was hard for him to believe that they were able to enjoy this luxury. Perhaps this was, indeed, "the promised land".

Zapato pointed at the bed nearer the window, indicating he had reserved it for Gaitero. The exhausted new arrival, with his clothes still on, practically fell onto the comfortable mattress. As he glanced toward the window, he could see the last vestiges of sunlight quickly disappearing. His first day in the USA was quickly coming to a close. He was soon in a deep slumber.

A wonderful combination of soft sunlight and the aroma of brewing coffee awoke Gaitero.

Outside his window there was an oak tree like the one outside of the dining room window. It made for a wonderful natural filter, buffering the effects of the rising sun. He was refreshed and ready for a day of exploration. In the bed across the room, Ignacio was still asleep and Fernando was careful not to disturb him. Still fully clothed, he entered the hallway and saw a man carrying an armful of white towels. He was older than Fernando and wore a black beret and wire-rim glasses. He turned toward the young Spaniard.

"Buenos días. Soy Aniceto Fernandez, y muy bienvenido! Estoy llevando estas toallas limpias al baño. Venga."

Aniceto, his new landlord, had warmly introduced himself and welcomed Fernando. He was replenishing the communal bathroom with fresh towels. He gestured to Gaitero to follow him.

After a wash, Fernando dressed and went downstairs. In typical Spanish fashion, breakfast was light....coffee with boiled milk, toasted bread, and some cheese and fruit. As he was finishing his meal, Zapato joined him. Refreshed, Fernando was anxious to learn more about what he might expect on Monday morning at the cigar factory.

As his friend and mentor took his last swallow of coffee and rose from his chair, he pointed toward a doorway at the back of the main hall. Gaitero followed closely behind. Beyond the doorway, there was an enclosed outdoor area. Many men were gathered, sitting on long wooden benches in the bright morning sun. It was rather cool, and a large wood-burning fire provided just enough warmth for comfort.

Scattered amongst the men were several large stone carving wheels mounted vertically on what appeared to be a type of wooden wheelbarrow. A system of pulleys and a foot pedal provided the power that turned the stone wheel. Fernando immediately recognized them as portable Galician sharpening stones. These caught the attention of Fernando.

"Anda! Los afiladores gallegos!"

Fernando excitedly confirmed what they were.

Since the Middle Ages, Galicians, particularly those from the province of Ourense, were well-known for their blade-sharpening skills. Many sharpeners could be found in the Galician community in Cuba, but Gaitero hadn't expected to find something so iconically northern Spanish in Tampa.

As more men came out to enjoy the sun, several took their positions at the stone wheels. Maruxa appeared with many of her best knives from the kitchen. Placing them on a bench near the wheels, she collectively thanked the sharpeners with her usual smile. As the Galicians began pedaling, a calming whirring sound could be heard. Each man reached for a knife and deftly sharpened it, sparks flying about. Within minutes, each knife had been perfectly sharpened.

As conversation among the gathered men continued, some, including Ignacio, began reaching into small boxes or leather pouches. Fernando noticed that they were retrieving curious-looking knives. They were not large. Some had wooden handles designed for grasping with one hand. Others were merely pieces of metal with a sharp edge. These knives were curved, almost like a wide crescent moon. They began handing these to the Galician sharpeners, and the whirring and the sparks continued.

Fernando remained curious about these strange-looking knives.

Chapter Fifteen

Ignacio handed his two curved knives to one of the sharpeners. Fernando noticed that they were very impressive looking, with beautiful hardwood handles. Ignacio turned toward his old friend.

"Estas se llaman 'chavetas'. Son las herramientas más importantes para nosotros que hacemos puros a mano. Se usa para cortar las hojas de tabaco en una manera muy precisa. Tienes que siempre mantenerlas muy bien afiladas, y nadie puede hacerlo mejor que los gallegos."

Zapato explained to Gaitero that these cutting tools were called "chavetas". They were used by the cigar rollers to cut the tobacco leaves in a very precise manner. It was crucial that they always be well-sharpened, and no one could do this better than the Galicians.

As Ignacio retrieved his two chavetas, he placed some coins in a wooden cigar box attached to the wheelbarrow of his sharpener. The Galician smiled and tipped his black beret in appreciation. He then explained to Fernando that these men made a decent living utilizing their skills in Tampa. In addition to keeping the chavetas in proper form, they would wander the streets of Ybor City and West Tampa offering their services to households and restaurants. Each man had a type of whistle that they would blow, making their presence known. Curiously, they were also known to repair umbrellas....an unusual combination. Ignacio elaborated further.

"También sirven como un periódico porque saben todo lo que está pasando en el barrio. Mientras sus clientes esperan, los afiladores les

dan todos los chismes y noticias. 'Fulano se casa con tal fulanita'...'El hijo de Casimira regresa a España'....'La pescaría siciliana en La Séptima tiene pargo a la venta hoy'....etc.

Most interestingly, Ignacio went on to explain that the sharpeners also served as a type of newspaper or town crier...informing everyone as to the local news and gossip. Who's marrying whom, who is returning to Spain, what's on sale at the Sicilian fish market, etc.

Fernando was intrigued by this. He had seen the sharpeners on the streets in Havana, but didn't realize the unique role they played in the community.

"Zapato, explícame más cómo encuentras tu trabajo, como son las fábricas de puros? Que clase de trabajo puedo conseguir en ellas?"

Fernando had asked Ignacio to explain more about working in a cigar factory. What is it like? What kind of work might he find in them? Though he had lived in Cuba for four years, he knew little about the subject since he had been a stevedore.

Ignacio reminded him that Tampa was emerging as a world center of cigar manufacturing. The political stability and low import duties on Cuban tobacco had served the manufacturers well. The city, eager to

lure new industry, had promised the factory owners protection from labor strife. Factories were relocating from other cities at a rapid rate...from New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Atlanta, and others. The future looked promising for an ambitious young man who was interested in learning the business.

Zapato went on to elaborate on what could be expected. There were many different jobs in the factories. These included menial labor such as unloading bales of tobacco, the shipping of completed boxes of cigars, etc. "Strippers" removed stems from the leaves. "Banders" would place the signature foil bands on completed cigars, and "sorters" would place cigars in boxes to maximize the visual appeal. This means clustering by similar size and color. The most valued jobs, after supervisors and foremen, were the "selectors". After the tobacco leaves were stripped, they would sort them by quality. Ignacio proudly told Fernando that he had worked his way up to being a master cigar roller....a valued and well-paid position in the factory. The highest quality tobacco leaves were reserved for him and his fellow master rollers.

Fernando was learning that the cigar industry was not unlike the wine or jewelry business. It produces desirable products of variable quality and had a following of aficionados. It seems to be a subculture onto itself.

"Gaitero, voy a mi trabajo cada día vestido con camisa blanca, con mangas largas, y una corbata. Lo que hago es una arte...y me gusta muchísimo. Tengo mucho orgullo en lo que he logrado. Tengo una vida muy buena aquí en Tampa. Te deseo lo mismo, hermano."

Ignacio told Fernando that he went to work every day dressed in a white, long-sleeved shirt, with a tie. His work was considered an art, and he was very proud of what he had accomplished. He lived well in Tampa and wished the same for his best friend.

Fernando had a new appreciation for the industry that was drawing so many immigrants to Tampa and propelling its incredible growth. He found himself anxious for Monday to arrive.

"Zapato, me puedes enseñar ahora mismo cómo hacer un buen puro de mano?"

Gaitero had asked Ignacio if he could show him right now how to roll a fine cigar. The response was a look of surprise, with a broad smile.

"Paciencia, mi amigo..paciencia."

"Patience, my friend...patience" was Ignacio's reply.

Chapter Sixteen

Fernando and Ignacio spent the rest of the weekend relaxing and getting Fernando oriented to his new home. Zapato was the anxious tour guide. On Sunday they took the short streetcar ride to "downtown Tampa". Fernando remained fascinated by the Tampa Bay Hotel and envied the wealthy tourists and winter residents that paraded around the hotel grounds in the latest fashions. Ignacio explained that even though downtown Tampa was only a few miles from Ybor City, the cultural differences were vast. Ybor City was part of the City of Tampa, but everyone in Tampa referred to them as if they were separate towns, and in essence they were.

On the return from downtown, they got off the trolley at the corner of 14th St and 7th Ave. On the south side of La Séptima, taking up the whole block up to 15th St, was a large wooden building. As they approached it, Ignacio stopped and pointed to it.

"Mira, Gaitero. Aquí es done trabajo, y con buena suerte, trabajarás allí también. Esta es la fábrica de puros de Sanchez y Haya."

Ignacio told Fernando that this was the Sánchez and Haya cigar factory where he worked, and with good luck, he will work there as well.

Fernando was impressed by how large the factory was. Ignacio went on to explain that all the factories had very large rectangular windows and were oriented on an east-west axis. This design maximized the amount of light entering, while preventing the rising or setting sun from blinding the workers as they rolled cigars all day. Seeing the factory made Fernando all the more anxious and curious about his interview the next morning.

Zapato gestured to his friend to follow him as he crossed the street.

"Te invito a tomar una merienda en mi café y pastelería favorito."

Ignacio had invited Fernando to join him in a snack at his favorite café and pastry shop.

As they entered the pastry shop, Fernando noticed the name, "LAS NOVEDADES", prominently painted on the store front display windows. The display cases were full of traditional Spanish and Cuban pastries. In Spain, such delicacies were appropriately referred to as "novedades", or "novelties" in English. Hence, the name of this most interesting café. He also noticed that a variety of sandwiches were offered as well.

When they entered the cafe, Gaitero felt he had been transported back to Spain. It was full of people, and the aroma of sweets, strong coffee, and fine cigars filled the air. They took their seats and a waiter hurried over.

"Hola, Zapato. Que tal?"

"Muy bien, Pepe. Y tu?"

Pepe, the waiter, greeted Ignacio warmly. It was obvious that he was known here, as Pepe used his nickname. Ignacio had returned the greeting.

"Por favor, empezamos con dos Cubanos mixtos y dos cafés con leche, después dos cremas catalanas."

Pepe acknowledged Ignacio's order with a nod and a smile and scurried away to fill the order. Fernando understood that he had ordered two coffees with milk and two Spanish versions of creme brûlée. But the third item, "mixed Cubans" was baffling to him. He asked Ignacio to explain.

"Zapato, que son Cubanos mixtos?"

"Gaitero, sabes lo que es un sándwich? Parecido a que llamábamos en Asturias 'emparedados'?"

Ignacio had asked if Fernando knew what a sandwich is, referring to the term they had used at home for a similar version, before the English invention became well-known in many other countries.

Fernando said he did, because they had become increasingly popular in Cuba since the American occupation after the Spanish war.

"Bueno, son sándwiches hechos con el pan Cubano, jamón, puerco asado, un salchichón Italiano seco, queso suizo, rebanadas de pepinillo, y mostaza o mantequilla. Después lo meten en un horno hasta que se calienten un poco. Son deliciosos y son muy populares aquí en Tampa."

The most generous "tour guide" elaborated that a Cuban mix was a sandwich with baked ham, roasted Cuban-style pork, Italian salami, Swiss cheese, sliced pickles and mustard or butter. He considered them delicious, and they had become very popular in Tampa.

Just as Ignacio was concluding his explanation, the coffee and sandwiches arrived. Taking his first bite, Gaitero instantly agreed with Zapato...it was a delicious sandwich.

Little did Fernando know that he had just experienced what would essentially become a rite of passage before anyone could call themselves a true "Tampeño".

Chapter Seventeen

The sounds of doors opening and closing, along with voices in the hallway, served as an excellent alarm clock. It was Monday morning, and the boarding house was as busy as a beehive. Fernando noticed that Ignacio was already dressed...looking quite dapper in his starched white shirt and tie. Ignacio turned to Fernando.

"Buenos días. Un consejo importante. Apúrate al baño, que ya hay cola!"

He had advised Gaitero to hurry up and get to the bathroom, as there was already a line of men waiting their turn.

Fernando was soon washed and dressed. After a quick breakfast, the two men began their brisk walk to the Sánchez y Haya cigar factory. Fernando could feel his heart racing a bit. He wanted to make a good impression. Ignacio detected his nervousness and stopped walking. He put his arm on Fernando's shoulder.

"Gaitero, por favor. No te preocupes de nada. Seguro que todo saldrá bien."

Ignacio had told Fernando that he shouldn't worry so much. He was sure that everything would work out well.

Gaitero was reassured, and a sense of relief came over him. They had arrived at the Sánchez y Haya factory.

Fernando was amazed at the number of workers that were filing into the factory. As they entered the large door, he saw lines of workers waiting to insert their payroll cards into a large time clock. He had never seen this before and was impressed.

Further down the hallway, Ignacio gestured to the left and they entered a rather large office. Ignacio addressed a woman sitting at a large wooden desk.

"Buenos días, Adela. Puedo hablar con Señor Castañeda?"

He had asked if he could speak with Mr. Castañeda.

"Hola Ignacio, como estás? Como no, un momentito, por favor."

Adela had answered that he could, and to wait moment .

Adela quickly returned, followed by a tall, husky man with a thick moustache. The woman returned to her desk. The man smiled and nodded in recognition toward Ignacio.

"Bienvenido. Soy Fausto Castañeda, el gerente de contratación y personal. Y como te llamas?"

The gentleman had introduced himself to Fernando as Fausto Castañeda, the manager of hiring and personnel. He was the one to whom Ignacio had spoken about Fernando. Gaitero noticed that Mr. Castañeda, like Maruxa and Aniceto, had introduced himself using only one surname. Spanish people normally used two surnames...their father's, followed by their mother's. He found this odd but refocused his attention on the present.

Ignacio exchanged greetings and then politely excused himself to begin his workday. Mr. Castañeda explained that he wanted to give Fernando a quick tour of the factory, then sit and talk with him. They exchanged personal information. Fausto explained that he was from Cantabria, Spain, the area that borders Asturias to the east, and is similar in geography and culture. Fernando immediately felt at ease and found the manager to be very friendly and engaging.

They were still on the main floor, and it consisted of the administrative offices and the shipping and receiving departments. This floor was where the tobacco bales were unloaded as they arrived from Cuba. Cigar boxes from the nearby box factories were also received here. Finally, the finished product, boxes of cigars, were sent out to be loaded onto railroad cars destined for points across the globe.

At the back of the main floor were large loading docks, partially protruding beyond the facade of the building itself. Behind these were several elevators powered by a system of weights and pulleys. These were used primarily for moving freight, as opposed to people, from floor to floor. Permeating the area was the strong aroma of tobacco. Fernando could see men unloading huge bales of tobacco off an enormous horse-drawn wagon. Fausto explained that these had arrived early this morning from Havana, having been shipped there from farms in Pinar Del Río, the westernmost part of Cuba. This area was known for growing the best tobacco in the world.

Fernando and Fausto descended a large wooden staircase into the sub-basement level. There, the young Spaniard could see men scurrying about, cutting open the bales and placing the loose leaves in separate bins. They were taken on huge hand trucks to the "stripping" area. Women grabbed handfuls of leaves and peeled off the stems,

placing them in yet another bin. These were transported to an adjacent area where well-dressed, serious-looking gentlemen would sort through them, randomly taking some out. The samples were hung on a wire for close inspection. These were the selectors, verifying the presumed quality of the latest purchase of tobacco. Though called "escogedores" or "selectors", their job was really quality control. Certain areas and specific farms in Cuba grew tobacco of varying quality, and this was reflected in the wholesale price of the raw tobacco.

Fernando was fascinated by the constant, organized frenzy of activity around him. It was like a well-choreographed fast dance that seemed to flow effortlessly. Fausto gently grabbed Gaitero's arm and guided him toward another staircase. They ascended two levels and entered a cavernous well-lit room running the entire length of the building. The large multi-paned windows Fernando had noticed yesterday dominated the space. His senses were pleasantly overwhelmed by that familiar aroma of tobacco, a thunderous voice that could be heard across the room, and a strange, rhythmic "clickety-clack", not unlike a train traveling across tracks.

Chapter Eighteen

As Fausto motioned to Fernando to continue walking into this vast open space, the young Asturian began to dissect the various sounds and sights. The clickety-clack was the cutting of the tobacco leaves with the chavetas...those curious knives. The aroma of tobacco was blended with that of coffee being distributed to the workers by an older man wheeling large urns of the popular beverage, some with black coffee, others coffee with milk, through each row of work benches. The workers would drop a few coins in a box next to the coffee urn. Another man, apparently a supervisor, wandered through the rows of workers. Occasionally he would take a sample from the workers' stacks of completed cigars. Any cigar not meeting his tough standards would be rejected. Fausto explained the rollers were paid a certain amount for each completed cigar, in addition to a small base wage. Across the room Fernando noticed a wooden platform, elevated slightly higher than the workers. On this platform was a tall, wooden chair, upon which sat a gentleman whose voice permeated the entire space. As they drew closer, the voice was vaguely familiar to Fernando. He turned to Fausto.

"Señor Castañeda, que hace ese caballero?"

He asked Fausto what the gentleman was doing.

"Él es el lector de la fábrica. Mientras los trabadores trabajan, él lee todo el día. Así no se aburren tanto de hacer la misma cosa por nueve horas. Hemos notado que la producción sube con los lectores...parece que hay un ritmo calmante entre la voz del lector y el proceso de hacer los puros a mano."

Fausto explained that this man was the factory "reader". He would read to the workers while they worked so that they wouldn't get bored with the monotony of doing the same thing for nine hours a day. Production actually rose when the readers became common in the factories. It appears that there is a calming rhythm that develops between the reader's voice and the cigar rolling process.

While living in Havana, Fernando had heard of the readers from some friends who were cigar makers but hadn't realized the extent to which they formed an integral part of the factory culture. Fausto went on to explain that these men were usually educated and fluent in several languages. Fernando learned that usually they would read several newspapers in the morning...some from Spain and Cuba, and in some factories an Italian one as well. Though the editions from Europe were usually a month or so old, the workers none the less appreciated any news from "home". In the afternoons, the readings would usually be novels or poetry drawn from the classics, authors such as Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, etc.

As the two men got closer to the reader, the voice became even more familiar. Fernando realized that the lector was the translator who had been so helpful to him when he arrived at Port Tampa.

"Señor Castañeda, yo conozco a este señor. Es el traductor que me ayudó tanto cuando llegué al puerto el viernes! Que casualidad. Él se llama Armando Nogueira Yglesias, verdad?"

Fernando explained to Fausto that he recognized this gentleman as the helpful translator at the port, and thought his name was Armando Nogueira Yglesias. The manager confirmed that he was and commented that Armando was one of the best and most popular readers in Tampa. Since most were multi-lingual, they also worked as translators. Having him at Sánchez and Haya was good for the factory as well as the workers. The rapid growth of the cigar industry in Tampa meant that there was competition amongst the factories to attract the best rollers, and many chose to work where the best readers were. Fausto explained that it was the workers themselves, and not the factories, who chose and paid the readers. Fernando was quite fascinated by all this.

Fausto told Fernando that the third level above them was the banding and packing areas. There, the "banders" would place the decorative

foil bands on the cigars, and the "sorters" would place them in boxes, organizing by similar size and color. Because he was running a bit short on time, Mr Castañeda suggested that they should now go to his office and have a quiet talk. They took the rear staircase down to the main level.

As they entered the office, Mr. Castañeda gestured to Fernando to take a seat. He began by telling the young man that he could call him Fausto. This made Fernando relax even more. The manager went on to explain that there was an opening in the shipping and receiving department and felt that Fernando would do well there. He further explained that after a time, if his performance and attendance were good, they would consider assigning him to a master cigar roller as an apprentice, assuming he had an interest. Fernando told Fausto that this sounded very good to him.

"Voy a llamar a Julio, el capataz del departamento. Le había hablado de tí, y él quiere conocerte."

Fausto explained that he was calling Julio, the foreman of the department. He had already spoken to him about Fernando, and Julio was interested in meeting him.

Fernando was quite pleased with how things were developing for him. He felt confident that his decision to come to Tampa was a good one.

Chapter Nineteen

After a brief phone conversation with Julio, Fausto asked Fernando if he remembered how to get to the shipping and receiving department. He replied that he did...he'd always had a good sense of direction. Fausto thanked him for his time and wished him the best of luck.

When Fernando arrived at the loading docks, there was a frenzy of activity. Several large horse-drawn wagons waited their turn to access one of the three loading bays...some were delivering, and others were removing goods. He approached several men busily unloading a wagon.

"Por favor, estoy buscando a Julio, el capataz. Me mandó Fausto Castañeda."

Fernando told them that he was looking for Julio, the foreman, and that Fausto had sent him.

One of the three men, without glancing up, brusquely pointed toward a large podium against the far wall. Normally, Fernando might have

interpreted his manner as rude or dismissive, but he had become accustomed to such behavior while a stevedore on the docks of Havana. It wasn't personal.

Fernando walked to the podium. It was large, and papers covered most of the surface. No one was there. A telephone on the wall began ringing. After about a full minute, a man came racing over and answered the phone. The man was rather tall and thin, but muscular in build, probably in his thirties. He was of olive complexion and had black curly hair with some Oriental features. He reminded Fernando of several former co-workers in Cuba.

"Sí, Sí. Como no..por supuesto! Lo más rápido que pueda. De nada. Gracias."

The man answering the telephone had responded with "Yes. Yes. Of course! You're welcome. Thank you." Obviously, it was a request from a superior. From the man's accent, Gaitero knew that he was Cuban. The frenzy was interrupted when the man seemed to pause, take a deep breath, and turned to Fernando, offering his right hand in a greeting. Fernando extended his as well.

"Eres Fernando Suárez? Me llamó Fausto. Soy Julio Ramirez. Vamos a un sitio más tranquilo."

The foreman had introduced himself as Julio Ramirez and verified that the young man was the Fernando Suarez about whom Fausto had called. He suggested they go to a quieter place.

Julio gestured for Gaitero to follow him into a make-shift, glass-enclosed office a short distance away. The din quickly diminished as Julio closed the door behind them. He then took a seat behind a small desk and pointed at a chair in front of the desk. Fernando sat down. Julio began going over a few scribbled notes. After a few minutes, he looked up at Fernando.

"Puedes empezar a trabajar mañana? Se nota que necesitamos más empleados, verdad? Para empezar es nada más que descargar y cargar de las carretas. Ofrecemos once kilos a la hora, para empezar. Tu turno empieza a las siete y media de la mañana, y termina a las cinco. Trabajamos desde el lunes al viernes. De vez en cuando te pedimos a trabajar medio día los sábados, obligatorio si estamos muy ocupados. Tienes media hora libre para comer, sin pagarte. Estás interesado?"

Fernando was surprised that Julio had offered him the job on the spot. Noting that it was evident that more employees were needed, he asked if he could start the next morning! They were offering eleven cents per hour. His shift was Monday through Friday, from 7:30 AM to

5:00 PM. Occasionally he would be asked to work half a day on Saturdays, mandatory if they were busy. He would have a 30-minute unpaid lunch break. Fernando always had a knack with numbers and quickly calculated that he would earn close to five dollars per week, a bit more when he worked on Saturdays. He accepted the offer.

Julio stood and extended his hand in welcoming Fernando to Sánchez and Haya, telling him to stop by the main office before leaving. There were papers he had to fill out. The rapidity with which all this had just occurred left Gaitero almost in disbelief. While it wasn't true that the streets in the US were paved with gold, he concluded that perhaps they were certainly paved with many good opportunities. He was filled with gratitude that Ignacio had persisted in urging him to come to Tampa. His timing was perfect....Tampa was indeed a "boom town"!

As instructed, Fernando stopped by Fausto's office. When he entered, Adela was attending to a young woman, but gestured to him to take a seat in the waiting area. A few minutes later, the young lady stood, thanked Adela, and gathered her belongings. He noticed that she was strikingly beautiful and spoke mediocre Spanish with a distinct accent. As she walked by him, she gave Gaitero a faint smile. Adela's voice refocused his attention somewhat.

"Muy bien, Señor Suárez. Felicidades, y bien venido a Sánchez y Haya."

Adela had warmly congratulated him and welcomed him to Sánchez and Haya. He thanked her and smiled in return, but his thoughts remained with the beautiful young lady as she left the office.

Chapter Twenty

Adela assisted Fernando in filling out the necessary employment forms. Literacy was not the norm amongst most of the workers, and Adela complimented him on his writing and reading skills. Gaitero's thoughts drifted back in time about ten years to Wednesday afternoons at the small chapel outside of his village in Asturias. There was one priest who valued education even more than religious doctrine. This cleric would offer the children a basic education, in addition to preaching Catholic dogma. Because of this, Fernando was able to read, write, and perform basic arithmetic functions. He would remain forever grateful to this visionary.

After a few minutes, Adela stood up and thanked Fernando for his time. She reminded him that he would start working tomorrow morning

at seven thirty. He thanked her and asked if she could recommend a place nearby that sold work clothes.

"Pues sí. Hay una tienda cerquita donde venden cosas así. Se llama 'El Sombrero Blanco'. Todo el mundo va allí para comprar ropa de varias calidades. El dueño es judío, pero habla español perfectamente. Queda en la esquina de La Séptima con la Calle Veinte"

Adela told Fernando that there was a clothing store nearby, on the corner of 7th Ave and 20th St. It was a popular place that offered clothing of various quality. Though the owner was Jewish, he spoke Spanish perfectly. The store was called "The White Hat".

This was a relief to Fernando, since the work clothes he brought from Havana were few and not appropriate for his new job. Here he would be working only partially outdoor and the weather was much cooler. He looked forward to some new clothes and a new start.

When Fernando arrived at the store, there were several men sitting on a bench just beside the entrance. They were middle-aged or older, dressed in black, and had full, bushy beards. As he walked by them, he could hear them speaking a language that was unfamiliar to him. It sounded remotely like German, which he had frequently heard on the

docks of Havana. Many of the ships that served Havana, both passenger and freight, were German. He was fairly sure that they were not speaking German, but perhaps a language quite similar to it.

When he walked into the store, he noticed that there very few customers. He assumed this was because today was a Monday. The store was quite large, and was stocked with not only clothing, but also housewares and tools, but seemed to be primarily a clothing store. He noticed a display of work clothing toward the back wall. As he began walking toward it, a loud voice interrupted the silence. He noticed an older man walking rapidly toward him.

"Buenos días, señor. Que necesitas hoy, por favor? Aquí tenemos de todo."

A gentleman had greeted him and asked what he needed today, advising him that they had anything he might want. He spoke Spanish extremely well, albeit with a distinct foreign accent. Fernando explained his needs. Within 10 minutes he had what he needed....proper pants, shirts and shoes.

He followed the gentleman to the cash register. As Fernando prepared to pay, the older gentleman looked up through wire-rimmed spectacles. He extended his hand toward the young Spaniard.

"No te reconozco. Hace poco que llegaste a Tampa? Me llamo Isidor Katz, y soy el dueño de esta tienda. Gracias por comprar aquí."

The older gentleman had introduced himself as Isidor Katz, the proprietor of the store. He told Fernando that he didn't recognize him and asked if he had recently arrived in Tampa. He thanked him for patronizing his store. As they shook hands Fernando explained that he was a recent arrival and had just secured a job at Sánchez and Haya. To his surprise, Mr. Katz responded with a broad smile, and proceeded to discount the amount of his purchase by ten percent. Before he could respond, Isidor told him that this policy had served him well. He had many loyal customers and wanted to share his success with others. He always offered potential steady customers an initial discount.

"Muchísimas gracias, Señor Katz. Cuantos años lleva en Tampa, y de donde eres?"

Fernando had thanked Mr. Katz. Always curious, he also asked him how long he had been in Tampa and wanted to know where he was from. He answered that he was originally from Romania. He had first come to the United States in 1875. After a brief stay in New York he went to Key West, drawn by the warm weather and the opportunities

offered by the cigar industry there. He had arrived in Tampa in 1891, following the cigar industry. Fernando gave him a brief summary of how he ended up in Tampa as well.

"Hombre, el futuro de la industria de puros está aquí mismo en Tampa. Tomaste una buena decisión!"

Mr.Katz reassured Fernando that his decision to come to Tampa was a good one, because the future of the cigar industry was here.

Gaitero could see no reason to disagree. He thanked Mr. Katz for his good service, gathered his purchases, and headed back toward La Gallega.

Chapter Twenty-One

Ignacio helped Fernando find his timecard and showed him how to operate the punch clock. It was Gaitero's first day at Sánchez and Haya. The two men parted ways as Ignacio walked toward the front stairway. Fernando continued to the rear of the building and exited onto the loading docks. The air was refreshingly cool, and he anticipated that he would find his work here to be less strenuous than unloading ships in the almost constant heat of Havana.

Julio was at his desk shuffling through papers. As Fernando approached, he looked up and smiled.

"Buenos días, Gallego. Estás listo? Esta semana vas a trabajar ayudando a Tomás. Así vas aprendiendo como hacemos las cosas por aquí. Está bien?"

Julio, addressing Fernando as "the Galician", had told him that he would spend the week helping Tomás. By "shadowing" him he would learn how things are done. The custom in Cuba was to refer to all Spaniards as Galicians, without regard to their actual place of origin, and apparently this tradition carried over to Tampa. Fernando's accent and physical features clearly revealed him to be a Spaniard. Rather tall, with blonde hair and blue eyes, Gaitero possessed what some considered to be the stereotypical features of someone from northern Spain.

Julio called out for Tomás. He then turned and drew a bit closer to Fernando.

"Mira, Gallego. Tomás es inteligente, un buen trabajador, y buena persona, pero un hombre de muy pocas palabras. Cuando él está explicando algo, usa el mínimo de palabras posible."

Julio explained that Tomás is a good worker, smart, and a good person, but is a man of very few words. When he explains something, he uses the absolute minimum number of words. Before Fernando could respond, he became aware that a man was standing immediately to his left. The man was very dark-skinned, rather short and stocky, but powerfully built. As he and Julio spoke, Gaitero surmised that Tomas was an Afro-Cuban.

Julio introduced the two gentlemen. As Julio departed, Tomas explained that every morning Julio looks at the papers in his desk and gives Tomás a quick summary of the expected deliveries to, and shipments from, the factory. He then repeats the process after lunch for the afternoon's activities. Apparently, Tomás was known to have a steel-trap memory. This more than compensated for his apparent illiteracy.

By now, several large wagons were arriving at the docks. With minimal, but very clear, explanations, Tomás guided Fernando through the process. Cigar boxes, cigar bands, and bales of tobacco would be unloaded and appropriately distributed to the corresponding departments. On occasion, Tomás would instruct Fernando to accompany other workers as they pushed hand trucks onto elevators. He was impressed with Gaitero's strength as he helped unload heavy

bales of tobacco. Fernando sensed that Tomás had a favorable first impression of his work ethic.

The morning passed quickly, and soon it was 12:30 noon and time for the lunch break. Workers were expected to self-monitor their allotted thirty minutes of un-paid mealtime. Depending on the weather, most of the employees would gravitate to the partially outdoor loading docks to enjoy their lunch. Long wooden benches had been provided to accommodate them. Soon the area was filled with workers, including Ignacio. Fernando noticed that Tomás had quietly slipped away to a quiet corner, away from everyone else. He was clearly a "loner", and Fernando was not offended.

"Bueno, Gaitero! Y qué, como fue tu primera mañana?"

Zapato was asking Fernando how his first morning had gone.

As Fernando began explaining that all had gone very well, his attention shifted to a group of young women seated nearby. He could hear that they were speaking Sicilian. He recognized one as the beautiful young lady he had seen speaking to Adela the previous day. He nudged Ignacio as he discretely pointed her out to him.

"Zapato. Esa es la chica de que te dije anoche. Sabes como se llama ella?"

Fernando told Ignacio that she was the girl he had spoken to him about last night. He asked if he knew her name. Zapato replied that he did not, but he knew that she worked as a cigar sorter and packer. He knew several Spanish girls who worked in the same department and he would ask them about her. Ignacio cautioned him that Sicilian fathers were extremely strict with their daughters, and that he would need to proceed cautiously with any romantic overtures. Fernando jokingly told Zapato that he did not intend to kidnap her, but rather just get to know her.

"Igual, Gaitero! Ten cuidado, que estás jugando con candela!"

Ignacio smiled and advised Fernando that, none the less, he should be careful...and that he is playing with fire!

Fernando returned the smile. The lunch break was at an end and the workers began to hurriedly return to their workstations. While the foremen were not draconian about it, they were known to admonish those who habitually violated the thirty-minute limit on lunch breaks. As Ignacio scurried away, he told Fernando that he would do a little

"research" on his behalf. Fernando acknowledged what he meant with yet another broad smile.

Chapter Twenty-Two

The rest of Fernando's first week at work went as well, or better, than his first day. Tomás had acknowledged his satisfaction with Gaitero's abilities. He was particularly impressed that the young Spaniard was literate and could read the orders that were placed on Julio's desk. This allowed them to work at a faster pace, not having to wait for Julio's verbal instructions. Fernando, a humble man by nature, was careful not to flaunt this skill for which he was so grateful. His innate sense of fairness made him hope that Tomás was in no way threatened by this young newcomer.

Tomás approached Fernando.

"Gaitero, mira. Ya son las cinco menos cuarto, el viernes. Puedes prepararte para terminar la semana. A las cinco menos cinco, nos dan los sobres con el sueldo para la semana. Ahora puedes celebrar como un rico!"

Tomás had told Fernando that it was 4:45 pm, Friday, and OK for him to start preparing to end his first week of work. At five minutes before five, they are given their pay envelopes with their weekly salaries and then he can celebrate like a rich man!

Adela appeared on the loading docks, pushing a cart filled with boxes of small envelopes. She handed one box to Julio and continued on to the other areas of the factory. Julio began distributing the envelopes, each labeled with an employee's name. Just as Fernando began to open his, Julio turned toward him.

"Fernando, siempre debes verificar la cantidad. Algunas veces se equivocan en la oficina!"

Julio had advised Fernando to always verify the amount he was paid since sometimes they make errors in the office.

Fernando followed this advice and counted the money. After counting twice, he approached Julio and told him there was an error. They had paid him for five days, but he had worked only four days, having started on Tuesday.

"Hombre, no es un error. Me quedé tan impresionado con tu trabajo que hablé con el señor Castañeda para pedir que te pagaran para la

semana entera. Él mismo hablo con el señor Haya y él dijo que sí, sería posible."

To Fernando's amazement, Julío had advised that there was no error. The foreman was so impressed with Fernando's abilities that he had asked Mr. Castañeda if it were possible to pay him for the entire week. With Mr. Haya's approval, they did.

Fernando thanked Julio profusely, although he felt a bit awkward. Julio assured him that it was well-deserved, but to be discrete about it. He shouldn't tell anyone else about it, not even Ignacio. Fernando agreed.

Fernando waited for Ignacio at the main entrance, a routine already established. Ignacio soon joined him, and they began their walk home.

"Mira, Gaitero. Hoy es el viernes, y la cena es más tarde. Entonces, vamos a merendar en Las Novedades, está bien?"

Ignacio reminded Fernando that on Friday's Maruxa prepares dinner a bit later than on the other days. He suggested they go to Las Novedades for a snack. Fernando agreed, but only if he could pick up the bill. They could celebrate the end of Fernando's first work week. Ignacio agreed.

As soon as Pepe had placed their orders on the table, Fernando turned to Ignacio. As he had been doing all week, he asked what he had learned about the beautiful young woman that worked in the sorting department. Ignacio had been rather evasive on the subject. Ignacio's eyes turned away from Fernando. Gaitero knew him well enough to know that this was his way of trying to buy more time. Clearly, Zapato was not comfortable with what he was about to tell his best friend.

"Por dios, Zapato! Dime lo que sabes....es lo que es, y ya! Estás casada o que?"

Fernando, growing a bit exasperated, asked Ignacio to "spit it out" and just tell him what he knows. He said whatever it is, it is! He wondered if she was married. If so, that would be the end of it. Gaitero got Pepe's attention and ordered two brandies, as if to prepare for a drama.

Ignacio told him the woman's name is Giuseppina Licata. She is 19 years old and single. She was born in Sicily and immigrated to Tampa ten years prior, after a brief period in New Orleans. According to Ignacio's sources, her father had done well financially, having turned a small vegetable farm into a thriving wholesale produce business. She

was said to be very friendly and charming, but demure and soft-spoken. Apparently, she rarely discussed her family with the other women, or anyone else. One of Ignacio's lady friends went on to say that apparently her father is extremely strict, and she is not allowed to date. Her social contacts are rigidly controlled by her mother and other female relatives and are limited to close family friends and extended relatives.

"Si su padre tiene mucho dinero, por qué trabaja en la fábrica?"

Gaitero had asked the obvious question. If Giuseppina's father was wealthy, why is she working at the cigar factory, in a relatively low-wage position?

Ignacio said that apparently there was a shroud of mystery surrounding the Licata family. His sources told him that whenever anyone would ask Giuseppina or her Sicilian co-workers and friends anything about her, they would be met with an awkward silence and a quick change of subject.

Fernando grew even more intrigued with the beautiful and mysterious Giuseppina Licata.