

We're All



AS ATTORNEY ROY COHN WHISPERS IN HIS EAR, SENATOR JOE McCARTHY COVERS THE MICROPHONES IN THIS FAMOUS SCENE FROM THE 1954 ARMY-McCARTHY HEARINGS. IT CAN NOW BE DISCLOSED THAT COHN WAS IMPLORING McCARTHY: "CORNEd BEEF ON *WHITE* BREAD! CORNEd BEEF ON *WHITE* BREAD! SENATOR, WHERE WERE YOU RAISED?"

Ears

BY JOHN SEDGWICK



My chatty friend A is on the phone with a piece of news she labels “the most amazing thing” about her close friend X and his wife, Y, and, despite my good breeding, I am all ears. X is a dapper gray-haired Wasp who works as a trust officer at a local bank; Y is a social worker, a full-figured, rosy woman of Irish descent. I don’t know them very well: They operate on the periphery of my social circle, friends of friends of mine. I’d like to know them better. As A speaks, I sense **A few discreet** that I am about to—quite precipitately.

A drops her voice to the most intimate whisper. This is going to be good.
words about the
“I think they like threesomes,” she says.
That is amazing, almost too amazing. I can’t picture the staid X and Y in bed with some **utter necessity** Z, but such incongruity only increases the notion’s appeal. In the appraisal of secrets, the less likely the tidbit, the higher its value. So long as it’s true, that is. “Oh?” I say, with **of sharing** just the slightest inflection. On hearing secrets, one must stay cool.

A quietly tells me all. X and Y had come over for brunch the other morning, she says, and they’d brought a girl along—a gorgeous **secrets** redhead in her early twenties. “They seemed very familiar, all three of them,” A says. “Touching just a little too much, you know?”

This alone seemed scanty evidence, but A had more. She’d discussed her impressions with her boyfriend, B, who had reported that he had frequently seen X and Y together on the street—each time in the company of a different single woman.

And then, late the other night when A’s boyfriend, B, was out of town, X had called her. He’d obviously had too much to drink, and he’d breathily said that he and Y were “thinking of

her." In the background, A distinctly heard the sound of Y and another woman giggling amid the creaking of bed-springs and the rustling of sheets. Then he came out with it: "Perhaps you should come over some night. Just by yourself," he purred. "It would be fun." A gently declined.

Now I am intrigued. I actually tremble a little, as though the air has grown chill. Suddenly, I know X and Y very well indeed. I'm gazing down on the rumpled sheets, seeing the tangle of arms and legs, hearing the ecstatic cries. . . .

A psychiatrist I know claims that all secrets recall the first one—what Mommy and Daddy were doing behind the bedroom door. Perhaps that explains why all the good secrets, the really good secrets, hold for us a combination of fascination and dread. We want to know but we don't want to know, which somehow makes us want to know all the more.

At least, I want to know. But I can't believe I'm the only one, for a small industry has developed to serve secrets to us fresh daily, and *somebody* must be buying the stuff. Think of all the tabloids and gossip columns. Think of Phil, Oprah, Geraldo and Sally Jessy, all of them loudly exhorting their guests to tell us things we have no business hearing, or Barbara Walters and her up-close-and-way-too-personal interviews. Think of all the tittle-tattle in *Spy* magazine, or the biographies Joyce Carol Oates has decried as "the new pathography" for giving us the dirt on our favorite celebrity artists (John Cheever's homosexuality, John Lennon's heroin addiction, Picasso's womanizing, etc.), or all those kiss-and-tell books from disaffected Reaganauts revealing Nancy's stargazing, Ron's short attention span and other White House scuttlebutt.

Let's face it: We're a nation of blabbermouths. It makes

you wonder if there are any secrets left.

The answer, of course, is yes, plenty, and thank goodness. To my way of thinking, secrets give life depth. By definition, secrets lie below the surface of things, out of sight, holding out the promise that there is more to the world than meets the eye. Secrets are a tease, a come-on. They are the body inside the silk dress, the thoughts behind the sultry glance. It's horrible to contemplate a world without them. George Orwell did that, and came up with *1984*. There is a frightening moment in the novel when Winston Smith tries to preserve the last shred of his independence from the all-knowing Thought Police by beginning a secret diary, even though it might cost him his life. He uncon-

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SECRETS HINT THERE IS

sciously writes "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER," then panics. And then he realizes that it doesn't matter whether he actually writes the words, and so continues writing. There are no secrets from the Thought Police.

Diaries aren't the only things that would suffer if everything were immediately known to everyone. There'd be no good jokes, no crushes, no surprise parties, no mystery novels, no scandals, no striptease. Life would be as flat as cardboard. With secrets, even the dreariest circumstances swell with possibilities. Every woman is a potential lover, every envelope could contain a check, and even a mundane cul-de-sac is imbued with mystery. I wrote a book once about a real private eye. He used to take me along on surveillance as he tracked down some errant husband for a divorce case. We'd tail the wanderer on his nightly cruise, invariably ending up near some shabby triple-decker in a run-down neighborhood, the kind of house one normally hurries by without a thought. But as soon as the man went

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WHAT HAPPENED TO JIMMY HOFFA? HE SLEEPS IN JERSEY, AND GIVES NEW MEANING TO THE TERM "COFFIN CORNER."



WHO KILLED JFK? SUSPECTS HAVE RANGED FROM FIDEL CASTRO TO CARLOS MARCELLO TO WOODY HARRELSON'S FATHER. FOR A SCARY SCENARIO, CHECK OUT JIM GARRISON'S RECENTLY PUBLISHED *ON THE TRAIL OF THE ASSASSINS* (SHERRILL DAN SQUARE PRESS).



inside the front door, it became to me a place of nearly Hitchcockian intrigue. The shaded windows, the peeling paint around the doorframe, the glossy metal siding, the blue light of the television set—all of these homey details were fraught with significance. I'd stare at the house for hours, half-crazy to know what was going on inside.

For every secret it seems there is a secret agent determined to ferret it out. As the legendary King Midas discovered, even the grass has ears. That's why few secrets are kept for very long and the ones that do remain unrevealed take on an almost mystical quality. Notorious secrets, such as who really shot John Kennedy, are tantalizing precisely because the answers are known. The holders simply choose not to tell. This can cause us to exalt the secret unduly.

MORE TO THE WORLD THAN MEETS THE EYE.

The formula for Coca-Cola, for example, is essentially a silly little bit of trivia, but it's been secret for so long that it has taken a revered place in the culture, right up there with Roger Maris's sixty-one-home-run season and the films of Marilyn Monroe. (I mean, does anyone ever wonder about the formula for Pepsi?) Referred to within the company by the code words Merchandise 7X, the secret recipe is stored in a vault at the Trust Company Bank in Atlanta and known to only a handful of Coke's most trusted senior chemists. Listen to Charles Howard Candler, the son of one of Coke's early owners, describe the day he learned the precious formula:

One of the proudest moments of my life came when my father . . . initiated me into the mysteries, inducting me, as it were, into the 'Holy of Holies.' No written memorandum was permitted. No written formulae were shown. . . . Containers of the ingredients, from which the labels had been removed, were identified only by sight, smell, and remembering where each was . . . on the

shelf. . . . To be safe, father stood by me several times while I compounded these distinctive flavors. . . . and I thereupon experienced the thrill of making up with his guidance a batch of Merchandise 7X.

Of course, there are secrets and there are secrets. Trade secrets are, as a rule, valuable only in the trade; state secrets valuable only to the state (and its enemies); office secrets valuable only around the office. But humans being what we are, dirty personal secrets about the famous hold universal appeal: rumors about Gloria Steinem having a face-lift, Barney Frank's tryst with a male prostitute, Donald Trump's mistress, that sort of thing. Such secrets are great social levelers, democracy at work. Their appeal lies in the pleasure we take in seeing the high and mighty cut down to size.

But not all dirty little secrets are equal. To gauge their relative explosiveness, a friend helpfully proposes the firearms term "muzzle velocity" to denote the speed with which one is inclined to shoot these secrets along. Primarily, muzzle velocity depends on the fame of the individual in question. It's a lot more interesting to learn that John Kennedy had extramarital affairs than that Joe Blow did. But muzzle velocity also depends on the shock value of the information, which can be expressed as the difference between what one had always assumed to be true about X and what this new information reveals. For that reason, we're more excited to learn that Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda are getting divorced, since they'd always come on so lovey-dovey, than that Elizabeth Taylor has yanked off yet another wedding band. The concept can be expressed most neatly in a mathematical equation. If muzzle velocity is mv , fame is f , our original perception of an individual is pI , and our new perception of an individual based on this shocking

WHAT WERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MARILYN MONROE'S DEATH? THOUGH MORE THAN ONE PROBE CONCLUDED THAT MARILYN OVERDOSED ON DRUGS, THE ACTUAL CAUSE OF DEATH WAS A HEART BROKEN FIRST BY JACK, THEN BOBBY, KENNEDY.

WHAT HAPPENED TO WALT DISNEY'S BODY AFTER HE DIED IN 1966? A BELIEVER IN THE PROMISE OF CRYOGENICS, DISNEY ARRANGED TO HAVE HIS BODY FROZEN, HOPING TO MAKE A COMEBACK. HIS BODY IS STORED IN TOMORROWLAND.

WHAT WAS ON THE MISSING 18½ MINUTES OF THE NIXON WATERGATE TAPES? INCREDIBLY, THE MATERIAL WAS ERASED NOT TO DESTROY CRIMINAL EVIDENCE, BUT TO COVER UP NIXON'S FRIVOLOUSNESS. THE ENTIRE SEGMENT CAUGHT THE PRESIDENT SINGING, OFF-KEY, THE LYRICS TO "LOUIE, LOUIE."

HOW TALL ARE PAUL NEWMAN AND ROBERT REDFORD? THEY'RE BOTH A LITTLE OVER FIVE FEET NINE, WHICH PROVES THAT HEIGHT AND STATURE AREN'T ALWAYS SYNONYMOUS.



WHAT WERE WILLIAM CASEY'S LAST WORDS TO BOB WOODWARD? "BOB, I KNOW WHO DEEP THROAT WAS. IT'LL BE OUR SECRET. JUST TELL BEN THAT I KNOW. . . ."



WHAT IS THE SECRET FORMULA FOR COCA-COLA? THE COKE FORMULA CALLS FOR WATER, SWEETENER, CARAMEL, PHOSPHORIC ACID, CINNAMON, VANILLA, CAFFEINE, NUTMEG, LIME JUICE, LAVENDER, GLYCERINE, GUARANA (HUH!) AND MERCHANDISE NO. 5; THREE PARTS COCA LEAVES TO ONE PART KOLA NUT.



revelation is p_2 , then $mv = f \times (p_1 - p_2)$. That is: The greater the fame and the wider the perception gap, the higher the muzzle velocity.

To check my theory, I consulted an expert in the field, James Revson. An heir to the Revlon fortune, he writes a gossip column, "Social Studies," for *Newsday* and was himself the subject of considerable flapdoodle after his spat with the *New York Post's* gossip doyenne, Suzy, over the reliability of her party guest lists—an interesting case of one blabster squealing on another. (When I spoke to him, he was still at it, as he casually let drop the little pearl that Suzy's age "begins with a seven.")

I asked Revson for the most electrifying piece of gossip he'd heard in the past few months. First, in the manner of the great gossipers, he titillated me with a secret he could not divulge, as if to assure me of his credentials. His ear, he said, was "still burning" from a tip he'd received over the phone a couple of days ago. "If it checks out," he said, "it'll be page-1 news all over the country." I'd have to wait and read about it, though, he said, because he wouldn't tell me. (I did read about it later, and he was dead right about the global implications. His little tip was that the Trumps were separating.) Then he cast his mind back and said that the rumor of George Bush's mistress had to be the hottest item he'd heard in a while. Bingo. Great fame, wide perception

gap, top score. Then I asked him to speculate on what *would* make a hot secret. "That Ed Koch had been secretly married for the last twenty years," he said, "and that his wife and children were living in California. If I heard that, I'd drop my mouth." Ditto mine.

One of the curious aspects of secrets is that, even though everyone loves to hear them, and almost everyone spreads them, few people will

MOST PEOPLE GOSSIP; FEW WILL ADMIT IT.
own up to doing so. Secrets are insidious in the way they commit their bearers to duplicity. Revson, for example, stressed that his was not a conventional gossip column, or, as he put it, "a trash-filled *National Enquirer*-type thing." He thinks of it as social commentary, even if he did once stoop to profiling Iris Sawyer, the former mistress of Tom Kempner, investment banker and husband of socialite Nan Kempner. (In fairness, Sawyer had come to him and offered to sit for an interview, and how could Revson resist?) In his column, Revson prefers the sociological highroad, "a lot of hows and whys" about how a restaurant gets hot or why people use personal publicists. This is understandable, for no one wants to be known as a gossip.

The word "gossip" actually comes from an Old English word for "godparent" and apparently derives from the chatter of the family elders at a christening. It's too bad the word has such slummy connotations nowadays. I go along with Sissela Bok, a professor of philosophy at Brandeis University (and, since we're gossiping, the wife of Harvard's president and the daughter of Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal), who argues in her book *Secrets* that gossip is "informal

personal communication about persons who are absent" and that, as such, it is "not morally problematic."

She notes that it has existed in all times and in all places. The Puritans, for instance, were terrible gossips. They were determined to uncover who among them was, as they said, "elect" and would be saved in the life to come, so they were endlessly chewing over the private lives of their neighbors. Women are said to be greater gossips than men, but Bok cites studies showing this to be untrue. Men merely gossip about different things and call the activity "talking shop" or "shooting the breeze." (As women's professionalization proceeds, no doubt their reputations as gossips will subside.) To her credit, Bok condones all of this, drawing the line only at deliberately betraying a confidence without valid reason, actual malice and passing along gossip one knows to be untrue—such as the FBI's alleged leaking to a gossip columnist of Jean Seberg's supposed extramarital affair with a Black Panther. Otherwise, Bok believes that gossip can provide enlightening commentary on human nature.

While gossip may appear to have got out of hand recently, what with all the ballyhoo over the impending Trump divorce, personal secrets are probably no less secure than ever. All that has changed is the direction of the popular interest—chiefly toward sex. By contrast, we're just as tight as ever about money. This discrepancy was brought home to me when I was researching a book on the lives of young heirs and heiresses. I asked one rich kid in Los Angeles how much money she had. "Oh, I can't tell you that," she said. "It's private." "Well, then," I kidded her, "let's talk about your sex life instead." And, to my surprise, she did, in voluminous detail, including a very frank account of a torrid affair with a polo-playing Spaniard that came to fruition on a marble tabletop.

I suspect that this development may have come about

with my own generation. Not long ago, I went through some of the letters my father had written home from London to his first wife during the Second World War. They'd been deposited in a local library after he died. Over the top half of one of them, I noticed, Dad had taped some brown paper. I looked closer and saw that someone had loosened the tape around the edges to sneak a peek underneath. Like Oscar Wilde, I can resist anything except temptation, and I stole a look underneath, myself. Sure enough, the passage referred to my father's brief infatuation with the family's au pair. My half brother had told me something about this already, so I wasn't astounded, but I was certainly surprised to see proof of it in my father's handwriting. I won't argue that previous generations would have been able to resist a peek; I will argue only that my father's generation was the last to think that one could merely tape a piece of paper over such a secret to keep it safe forever.

As a rule, sexual secrets don't make their way into print, which is a big reason why we end up talking about them instead. Journalistic standards, (continued on page 271)

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(continued from page 254) and libel laws, still dictate that what goes on behind closed doors remain secret, unless the participants themselves somehow make it public. Thus, even though James Revson was personally electrified by word of George Bush's supposed mistress, it never occurred to him to write about it. Like all the other journalists in the country, with the lonely exception of a free-lancer for the obscure *L.A. Weekly*, he left that decision to *The Washington Post*—even after the stock market dropped forty points because of the rumors. As part of a 20,000-word five-part assessment of Bush, *The Post's* investigative reporters Walter Pincus and Bob Woodward did look into the allegations. They found out that the woman in question, Jennifer Fitzgerald, had worked for Bush in various offices after he headed the Republican National Committee during the Nixon administration. The reporters knew, however, that in the capital rumors of hanky-panky always swirl around such women as Fitzgerald who are, in Pincus's words, "more capable and not as nasty" as their office colleagues. "Nothing was going on as far as anyone could prove," Pincus says. "That meant that either the rumors were wrong or Bush was extremely discreet. In the latter case, it would have no effect on his abilities as president." Thus, no story. In fact, Pincus could never even bring himself to ask Fitzgerald or Bush about the allegations. At that point, the truth of the matter was immaterial. It would remain a secret.

The secret and the sexual naturally converge. Sex is secret, and secrets themselves—or at least the transmission of them—are vaguely sexual. In telling a secret, one speaks in a lover's hushed voice. Especially if the secret is deep and personal, revealing it can make one feel weightless and dizzy—a plunging sensation like falling in love. Afterward, the twosome often feels newly intimate, as though they'd just made love.

The bond between secret sharers can be profound, as witnessed in all secret societies, most religions and not a few marriages. The big question left unanswered by Joel Steinberg's trial was why Hedda Nussbaum would stay with such an apparently abusive, murderous ogre. In part, one has to suppose, because she shared his secret. And one wonders about Carol Stuart and her allegedly murderous husband, Charles—the "Camelot couple." His apparent secrecy provides the central mystery to the case. Did she really never know she'd married a monster?

The learning of secrets is a seducer's art. As the unscrupulous John Malkovich character in the movie *Dangerous Liaisons* demonstrates, it takes little beyond the expression of loving interest to worm out a confi-

dence. Truman Capote was one of the better secret gatherers of our time. According to Gerald Clarke's recent biography, Capote could get just about anyone to tell him just about anything. Marlon Brando confided to him about his homosexual trysts, Yukio Mishima divulged that he wanted to "suck a big white cock" and asked Capote to pimp for him, even Jackie Onassis allowed him into her bedroom to converse while she was dressing for dinner (then banished him forever when he bragged about it).

Clarke was a friend of Capote's, and he himself had told Capote things he'd never want repeated. "He was so seductive," Clarke says. "No one could resist." To be sure, part of Capote's technique was simple horse-trading. He'd tell a secret about himself, thereby obliging his partner to respond in kind. "You'd feel cold and unfeeling otherwise," says Clarke. But Capote also cultivated the air of the loyal friend. "He created an atmosphere in which you wanted to tell him things. He'd look at you very intently with his intense blue eyes and you just couldn't disappoint him."

What is so unusual about Capote is that the great secret finders usually maintain reputations as secret keepers. But Capote blew all that with the calamitous publication of "La Côte Basque, 1965," a portion of his long-awaited, never-finished novel *Answered Prayers*, in which Capote, through thinly veiled characterizations, spilled everything about many of his closest friends, who proceeded to shun him unmercifully. Clarke recalls trying to talk Truman out of publishing the piece, one afternoon at Gloria Vanderbilt's pool. He told Capote that all his friends were sure to recognize themselves and be furious. "Nah," Truman replied, "they're too dumb." But, once revealed, secrets have a way of finding the place where they'll do the most harm. The friends learned quickly.

As with the proverbial cake, you can't have a secret and tell it, too. Bob Woodward is still pestered about the identity of Deep Throat, another world-class secret, which he won't reveal; nor will he entertain reporters' calls on the subject. His colleague Walter Pincus, however, confides that when Woodward is asked if Deep Throat is Al Haig or Alexander Butterfield or whoever, he responds only with an enigmatic smile and silence.

Secrets will do that. The best secret keepers are the ones who give nothing away. In *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, Thomas Powers describes former CIA director Richard Helms as a man whose instinctual secrecy went so far as to drain him of all personality. He was, writes Powers, "a man without qualities." His clothes, his house, his manner, his parties, even his car

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FEET

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revealed nothing about him. Powers writes: "It would be hard to imagine a deader black than the black of the 1950 Plymouth Helms drove to work for years, the sort of car it was easy to lose in traffic, hard to find in a parking lot." He concludes: "Anyone who asked what is Richard Helms like? what does he think? what is he for or against? would be hard put to come up with a single word in reply." This agent was himself a secret.

But, of course, the whole agency is a secret. What happened to Helms individually has occurred to the CIA institutionally, giving it a growing obsession with secrecy that—were it not for the supposed importance of the secrets being held—seems positively pathological. In older, simpler days, sensitive material was stamped "TOP SECRET" and only those with "Top Secret" security clearances were allowed to see it. Simple enough. Now the classifications have proliferated to the point where the joke is that a certain file is "only Top Secret."

Some such classifications accrue to a secret project, some to a means of intelligence gathering, some to a physical location. Within each domain, a totem pole of security clearances has risen, occasionally

going up so high it actually disappears into the mist. The material is so sensitive that the clearances themselves are classified. That's when things get a little weird. Morton H. Halperin, a former National Security Council staff member now with the American Civil Liberties Union, who received some measure of fame in the Seventies when Henry Kissinger had his phone tapped, had the classification "TK." He cannot reveal what "TK" meant, although others confide that it stands for Talent Keyhole and pertains to satellite reports. Halperin did say, though, that it could be a really bizarre experience to talk to someone with a higher security clearance—call him Major Major—about a certain classified matter. First, Halperin could only guess that Major Major had the higher security clearance; since that information would be classified, he couldn't know for sure. Yet Major Major might well have a radically different understanding of the matter at hand based on his access to more sensitive material. Still, Major Major could not reveal that information, nor could he reveal that he even had other information. But on the meeting would go, endlessly, pointlessly. "Basically, you couldn't be told that you couldn't be told," Halperin says. "It

was a situation where there was no honest answer that the person could give. By definition, an honest answer reveals something. He couldn't reveal anything."

Professionals have it easy, though, simply because there are clear rules governing their behavior. In everyday life, the matter is not so neat. When I heard the news about X and Y, I was burning to tell somebody. Like other things, a secret has to be shared to be fully enjoyed. But is that okay?

As Sissela Bok defined them, the rules of secrets are: Don't violate a confidence without good reason, don't pass along untruths, and try not to hurt anybody. But, as I contemplated them, I couldn't see how those rules applied in my case, or, in fact, in any case.

First of all, exactly what does it mean to break a confidence? My friend A didn't tell me not to tell anyone, but even if she had, I wouldn't have necessarily obeyed her. So many times, people ritualistically incant "Now don't tell anybody, but..." or "Between you and me and the lamppost" or some other similarly hackneyed formulation that means about as much as "I'll call you" after a one-night stand. The words function largely as a way of allowing them to squeal, so why should their mantra inhibit anyone else? When hearing the confidences of others, one has to go beyond words to divine actual intentions, and that isn't so easy. You practically have to weigh their character, and then act accordingly. Essentially, A is loose and freewheeling (which may be why X approached her in the first place). I couldn't believe she'd care all that much what I said, so long as I left her name out of it. That amounted to limited dispensation to use her information as I saw fit.

Now, was it true? Since this wasn't my secret, I couldn't say for sure. I don't mean to get too epistemological, but if you have to stick to absolute, clinically verified facts at all points in private conversations, no one will be left with much to say. This was gossip, I'll grant—hearsay, in legal terms—but it was gossip from a pretty good source. Of course, A would have been a better source if she'd actually participated in X and Y's ménage à trois, but then, she probably wouldn't have told me about it if she had. Still, weighing everything, I was inclined to believe A. First, because she was a good friend of X and Y's, and there didn't seem to be any point to her spreading lies about them. And second, because I trusted her impressions, and she was in a far better position to ascertain what was happening than I was. I would, in effect, ride on her judgment.

Now, about hurting X and Y. Okay, the law calls it slander, but I don't think it's really so awful. Yes, the story would cer-

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tainly harm the reputations of X and Y if the whole world knew about it. Already, my feelings about them had shifted markedly, although not necessarily for the worse. But then, I pride myself on my open-mindedness. Others may not be as tolerant and, once I had passed the secret along, who knew where it would go? That argued for limited divulgence.

Complicated as it sounds, I ran through this analysis in roughly the same period of time it takes to decide which of two calls to pursue when you get beeped with Call Waiting. Some moralists would assume that this is the end of the calculation. To me—and to most people I know—this actually is just the start. For me, the issue doesn't quite come sharply into focus until I consider whom I might possibly tell; that's when one really understands all the ramifications. The moralist's presumption is that something is lost when a secret is told. But that overlooks the fact that something can be gained too, namely a closer rapport with the receiver of this confidence, further enlightenment about the meaning and significance of the "secret" information and, more broadly, a contribution to the general understanding of human nature.

I mention the news to my wife over dinner. I regard it as one of the small pleasures of our marriage that we share such privileged information; confiding in her now comes as naturally to me as thinking. My wife seems interested, but not overly so. I know she won't pass it along, so I don't swear her to secrecy.

The real test comes later, at a party where I bump into my good friend C, who is a closer friend of X and Y's than I am.

Just as A had been with me—placing me in this sticky situation in the first place—I am eager to discuss the news of X and Y with someone who can help me make sense of it. In truth, I am also eager to please C, and I know he will be happy to be cut in on the news. During a lull in the conversation, I take the plunge. C expresses surprise, which gratifies me, then incredulity, which disheartens me. He asks my sources. Although I hadn't planned to, I name A, and immediately worry it will get back to her somehow. In my mind, I also see X's and Y's shocked faces staring at me.

Toward the end of the evening, I overhear C telling his wife, D, who is much more receptive. I am tempted to grab them, to plead with them not to repeat it, but I let them go. The secret is out of my hands.

A few weeks pass, and then I call back C to find out whatever happened to my news about X and Y. "Oh, yeah," he says. It takes him a while to recollect. "I mentioned it to a friend of mine. We decided it was probably true." Did the friend pass it on? "Probably," C says with a laugh. "But I told him not to."

Later, I see X and Y at a party. I watch them from the corner of the room. They are standing by the buffet table surveying the crowd. X is idly running his hand down Y's bare back, exposed by her dress, while the two of them scan the room, their eyes alert, as though they are searching for someone. They are still strangers, but I think I know what they are thinking. I have entered their lives. I am Z. ■

John Sedgwick wrote about novelist Seth Morgan in last month's *GQ*.

WHERE TO BUY IT

Which stores have which items? Check this list to locate the store nearest you carrying the fashions shown editorially in this issue (pages 180 through 249). Manufacturers have selected some stores listed. For information on additional stores and how to buy items not mentioned here, see page 275. (Some prices may be higher west of the Mississippi.) Merchandise is subject to prior sale.

Cover. Shirt: Paul Stuart, at Paul Stuart, N.Y.C. Trousers: Beau Brummel, at Beau Brummel, N.Y.C. Belt: Hermès, at Hermès Boutique, N.Y.C.

Page 179. For credit information, please see page 186. Page 181. Shorts: Pearl Izumi, at Bike Tec, Philadelphia; Bicycle Exchange, Washington, D.C.; Helen's Cycles, Santa Monica, Calif.; Paragon, N.Y.C.

Page 183. Shorts and tank: Adidas, at sporting-good shops, nationwide. Sneakers: Hi-Tec Sports, at Big 5, select stores; Blue Ridge Mountain Sports, select stores; Eastern Mountain Sports, select stores; Gart Bros., select stores; Herman's World of Sporting Goods, select stores; Oshman's, select stores; Sportmart, select stores. Page 186. Shirt and shorts: Fred Perry, at Nordstrom, select stores.

Page 187. Shirt: Pearl Izumi, at Cycle Logic, Boulder, Colo.; Elliot Bay, Seattle; Freewheel, Minneapolis; Richardson's Bike Mart, Dallas; The Hub, Aspen, Colo.

Pages 188–189. Sneaker, far left: Le Coq Sportif, at Foot Locker, nationwide. Sneaker, second from right:

Saucony, at Champs, select stores; Famous Footwear, select stores; Finish Line, select stores; Foot Locker, select stores; Sportmart, select stores; The Athlete's Foot, select stores; U.S. Athletics, select stores.

Page 220. Sport coat: Gianni Versace, at Charivari, N.Y.C.; Gianni Versace Boutique, N.Y.C.; Wayne Edwards, Philadelphia. Shirt: Mondo, at Bigsby & Kruthers, Chicago; Cyrils, Beverly Hills, Calif.; Lord & Taylor, select stores; Martini Carl, Boston. Shoes: Gucci, at Gucci boutiques, nationwide.

Page 221. Shirt: Paul Smith, at Charivari, N.Y.C.; Lord & Taylor, select stores; Louis, Boston, Boston and N.Y.C.; Mr. Guy, Beverly Hills, Calif.; Paul Smith, N.Y.C.; Ralph Davies, San Francisco; Wayne Edwards, Philadelphia. Trousers: Yohji Yamamoto, at Alan Bilzarian, Boston; Charivari, N.Y.C.; Ralph Davies, San Francisco; Yohji Yamamoto, N.Y.C. Shoes: Doc Martens, at Na Na Shoes, N.Y.C., San Francisco and Santa Monica, Calif.

Page 222. Sport coat: Sabato Russo, at Charles Speigel, Pittsburgh; J.C. Amber, Hollywood, Calif.; Jeraz, Chicago; Male I.D., Pasadena, Calif.; Stanley Korshak, Dallas; Traffic, Los Angeles. Shirt: Men Go Silk for L'Zinger, at Bacio, Minneapolis; Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C.; Camillion, Philadelphia; Charivari, N.Y.C.; L'Uomo Vogue, Southfield, Mich.; Theodore, Beverly Hills, Calif.; Ultimo, Chicago. Trousers: Comme des Garçons Homme Plus by Rei Kawakubo, at Barneys New York, N.Y.C.; Charivari, N.Y.C.; Commes des

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