

DEAD SOUL

Chosen as Russia's next leader by Boris Yeltsin's inner circle, in 1999, Vladimir Putin appeared to be a blank slate on which his supporters, his country, and the world could write their desires. Few saw what he really was, or the way he brutally erased his footprints on the climb to power.

Fewer still have survived to decode him. As Russian forces bend Georgia to their will, MASHA GESSEN tells how one small, faceless man—backed by the vast secret-police machine that formed him—took control of the world's largest country

N

early every weekday morning one of Moscow's central arteries, the Kutuzovsky Prospect, empties out suddenly, and an eerie, otherworldly silence takes hold. This means that police have sealed all the on-ramps to Kutuzovsky, an eight-lane avenue that cuts through the city from the west straight through to the Kremlin. Traffic backs up on the ramps for miles, but Kutuzovsky is quiet. Then a low hum can be heard, which quickly builds to a roar. Spread across the 60 yards of Kutuzovsky, a convoy of motorcycles and S.U.V.'s moves at breakneck speed, like fighter planes in tight formation. In the middle of it, veiled from onlookers by moving vehicles and densely tinted glass, rides Vladimir Putin, the Russian leader, in a custom-made black Audi with the license plate 007. He is commuting from his residence in Novo-Ogarevo, a country home that the Russians coyly refer to as a dacha but that a Westerner would recognize as a villa. He races along an avenue lined with enormous Stalin-era apartment buildings constructed for the Communist Party elite, then through the Arc de Triomphe, erected in cel-

celebration of Russia's victory over Napoleon, in 1812, and finally across the Moscow River. In years past, when the title Putin held was that of Russia's president, the formation would have headed for the Kremlin. Now the cars roar off toward the Moscow White House—the high-rise building that once housed the Russian parliament, where pro-Yeltsin Russians erected barricades against an attempted coup by hard-liners in 1991. Once, it was the symbol of a nascent Russian democracy. Now it's the command center of an entrenched Russian autocracy. An entire floor was redone before Putin moved in, claiming the title of prime minister and bringing the power of the Kremlin along with him.

The man in the car leads a shielded and perhaps lonely existence. His older daughter, Maria, 23, is rumored to be living in Germany; her 22-year-old sister, Katerina, is a student at St. Petersburg University, though it is

Russia is a changed country. The democratic reforms of the early 1990s have been reversed. Elections have been virtually eliminated. A new war with Georgia signals a return to an era when an aggressive, expansionist Russia threatened all its neighbors. Power in the country is concentrated to a degree even greater than in Soviet times in the hands of a small group of people. Under the old regime, two large power blocs, the Communist Party and the K.G.B., continually vied with each other for dominance. In the U.S.S.R., the K.G.B., whose job it was to gather information, provided much-needed corrections to the party line, allowing an occasional ray of light to seep through the ideological blinds. And while corruption was rampant in the Soviet Union, the competition between two corrupt power centers meant that there were limits to what either could steal. Russia may be the first country in the world that is

first post-Soviet president, felt besieged and betrayed by everyone he knew. In the preceding 18 months the ailing and alcoholic Yeltsin had gone through four prime ministers. The country was careening from political crisis to economic crisis and back. Like a boxer gone blind, Yeltsin was spinning in the ring, striking the air, losing his balance. Political power had perceptibly shifted to Yevgeny Primakov, a former Yeltsin prime minister and former head of the foreign intelligence service, who had entered into alliances with the powerful mayor of Moscow and a number of governors and federal-level politicians, and with the wealthy businessmen, known as the oligarchs, who had grown fat off Yeltsin and then abandoned him. The president's circle of trusted advisers had shrunk to what was known as "the Family": Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana; her husband, Valentin Yumashev, who was Yeltsin's chief of staff; and the oligarch Bo-

In Vladimir Putin's Russia, POWER IS CONCENTRATED TO A DEGREE even greater than it was in the Soviet Union.

unclear whether she actually attends classes. Putin shares the dacha with his wife, Lyudmila, from whom he is said to be increasingly estranged. Another resident is a black Labrador named Koni. A night owl, Putin rarely takes his meals in company, and does not usually return home from work until late, often past midnight. His hobbies are those of a loner: downhill skiing and horseback riding. As he speeds through the city, alone, he listens to audiobooks, often popular histories of Russia, which he came to rule almost by accident nearly 10 years ago.

Say you have a country and no one to run it. Say you decide to invent a president. Say you hold auditions, and then you pick someone. You endow him with all the characteristics that you, the people of your country, and many people elsewhere, want to see in a president. You present him, fully formed, to the world. You pat yourself on the back—and that is all you have time to do before everything starts to go wrong.

That is what happened to the people who invented—or thought they had invented—Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. They had a brilliant plan. That plan has been shattered by the man himself and, more important, by the secret-police apparatus that actually formed this man and continues to sustain him.

A decade after Putin's ascension to power,

ruled solely by its secret police. They control the economy and steal from it; they control the television networks and also watch them, believing what they see. Russia has become a closed system, sealed off from the rest of the world by a wall of secrets and lies.

In May of this year, with much fanfare, Putin handed over his post as president of the Russian Federation to a handpicked successor, Dmitry Medvedev, and installed himself as prime minister—a formality made necessary by the fact that Putin was constitutionally prevented from running for another term. Medvedev is the telegenic face who now attends G-8 summit meetings. But Russians continue to inhabit a country which is Putin's creation and in which his authority is supreme, and they will be living in Putin's Russia for a long time to come.

The Quest for a Faceless Man

This is the story of how the world's largest country, with all its nuclear warheads, all its oil, all its tragic history, and all its unfulfilled hopes, ended up in the hands of a small man and a large machine.

It begins with desperation. By the summer of 1999, Boris Yeltsin, Russia's larger-than-life

ris Berezovsky, one of Russia's richest men. Though Berezovsky controlled Channel 1, the country's largest TV network, this was not enough to permit Yeltsin to hold on to the reins. It seemed likely that when Yeltsin's second and final presidential term expired, in 2000, Primakov and his crowd would seize power. The Yeltsin-era economic and social reforms would be turned back, and the members of the Family, who were not saints by any measure, could very well find themselves not only in disgrace but also on trial. The Family needed a plan—and a man.

Incongruities of scale haunt the story. When I meet Berezovsky in London—where he has fled for his safety—he talks to me about the search for the man who would save Russia and the Family. What strikes me is how tiny the pool of potential candidates was, and how primitive the criteria. As Berezovsky tells it, he and other members of the Family were casting about, trying to see promise in the faces of the faceless men who were available. Anyone with any real political capital and ambition—anyone with a personality to speak of, in other words—had already abandoned Yeltsin. This is when they hit upon Vladimir Putin.

What exactly were his qualifications? Berezovsky had met him in the early 1990s, in St. Petersburg, where CONTINUED ON PAGE 380

Oil Dynasties

America every few months, none of which, as with the case of an Ecuadoran doctor he attacked in a drunken rage on a flight to La Paz, suggested Glenn McCarthy was going gentle into that night.

His life would not end gracefully. McCarthy dragged himself back from Bolivia in 1957, bruised, battered, and, if not exactly penniless, no longer a rich man; unable to build a pipeline to transport the natural gas he had discovered, he sold his Bolivian interests to a group of American companies for \$1.5 million, much of which he used to repay debts. His only asset of value was the Shamrock's aging nightclub, his beloved Cork Club, which was owned by its members. In a stab at reclaiming his glory days, McCarthy removed the club from the Shamrock and reopened it atop a downtown office building.

There he emerged as a nightclub impresario, hosting glittering floor shows packed with dancing girls and Las Vegas-style entertainers such as Soupy Sales and Mel Tormé. McCarthy's real passion, though, appeared to be bourbon. Every few months the papers carried a new item about a fistfight or car accident. By 1964 the Cork Club was in decline. Membership, once near 6,000 people, had fallen by two-thirds. It was losing money. McCarthy fired the dancing girls. In the coming years the club's reputation grew increasingly sordid. In 1967 the Houston

vice squad launched an investigation after a guest claimed McCarthy had hosted an "orgy" at the club, complete with live sex acts atop the tables; nothing came of it. By 1971 it was over. Membership was down to almost nothing. McCarthy announced he was closing the club. Houston shrugged. In 1972, McCarthy sold his mansion, the one he and his wife, Faustine, had built in 1937, to a developer, who swiftly demolished it and put up apartments. Quietly, so quietly no one noticed, the McCarthys moved into a modest house in the suburb of La Porte.

The story of Glenn McCarthy, once Houston's greatest wildcatter, had one final chapter. On the steamy afternoon of June 1, 1987, the first wrecking balls slammed into the walls of the Shamrock. It had been coming for years. In its day the hotel had hosted six American presidents, from Eisenhower to Reagan. By the 1980s it was rarely full, and the grand soirées that had once showcased Frank Sinatra and Milton Berle had long since given way to pimply bands playing the proms of teenagers from Pearland and Cypress and Houston's gritty south side. When a neighborhood group coalesced in a vain effort to save the old hotel, reporters were startled to find McCarthy in a protest crowd, stooped, almost 80 years old, but still angry enough to curse the businessmen who were tearing down his beloved Shamrock to make way for a parking lot.

McCarthy didn't come to the big Irish

wake they had thrown on June 9, 1986, the night the Shamrock closed. It was a sad evening. An older woman cried in the lobby. Middle-aged men led their children past the pool, pointing out where they swam as boys. Up in the penthouse a bagpiper serenaded the last visitors as they took the elevators down after midnight. Nor was McCarthy there the day they began auctioning off 35,000 bits of his memories, hundreds of Shamrock towels and robes and thousands of pieces of Shamrock dinnerware. One man bought one of the bars and opened it as the Shamrock Café in a Houston strip mall.

McCarthy's kidneys gave out a month later. Doctors wheeled him out of surgery at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, and Faustine placed him in a nursing home. He lingered for nearly a year, finally dying, a day after his 81st birthday, on December 26, 1988. The newspapers hailed him as a "Texas giant" even as they tried to explain to younger readers who he had been. A thousand people attended his memorial service, where a bar singer from the Shamrock's glory days led renditions of "You'll Never Walk Alone" and "Londonderry Air." They buried him in Houston's Glenwood Cemetery, steps from the grave of Howard Hughes. "He was a tough man, and the drinking and fight stories are true enough, but he wasn't anything like that character in *Giant*," one old friend told a reporter. "He was a man, and he took a good deal of pride in the fact. I don't think there's ever been anyone like him, before or since." □

Vladimir Putin



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 338 Putin was deputy mayor. Putin had helped Berezovsky, who owned a network of car dealerships, set up shop in the city—and did not demand or accept a bribe. This was unusual behavior, and it impressed Berezovsky. They communicated off and on over the years, forming not exactly a friendship—the Jewish intellectual and the K.G.B. officer with his working-class background had little in common—but more a sort of mutual loyalty. In February 1999, when Berezovsky, who had by then held a series of top-level government appointments, came under attack from the newly power-

ful Primakov, and was shunned by most of the political elite, Putin made a point of attending Berezovsky's wife's birthday party. Berezovsky repaid Putin by championing his candidacy to run the F.S.B., Russia's secret police, formerly the K.G.B., and ultimately by suggesting that the Family make him president.

To sum up, the man's qualifications were: he did not take a bribe from a car dealership, and he had been unafraid to go to a party for an acquaintance who had fallen into disfavor. Putin had no articulated political vision and no identifiable political ambition. Nor had he had any apparent career successes. As a K.G.B. agent he had accomplished nothing; as deputy mayor he had run his boss's failed campaign for re-election and had then narrowly avoided a corruption probe; and, if Berezovsky is to be believed, he was stunningly ineffectual as the chief of the secret police. Berezovsky says that when he went to see Putin at the F.S.B. headquarters, in Lubyanka Square, Putin would insist that they talk in a disused elevator shaft, because he was convinced that his own office was bugged.

In the spring of 1999, Putin's name was

bandied about among members of the Family. In July 1999, Berezovsky was dispatched to France, where Putin was on vacation with his wife and daughters, to draft him as Russia's new president. They spent a day talking in Putin's rented condominium, and in the end, says Berezovsky, "he said to me, 'All right, let's try it. But you understand that Boris Nikolaevich has to ask me himself.' And I said, 'Volodya, of course, I came here at his request. I just needed to make sure there would be no misunderstanding, where he starts talking with you and you start saying you are not interested.' And he said, 'No problem, let's do it.'"

Putin flew back to Moscow and met briefly with Yeltsin. As Berezovsky recalls, Yeltsin remarked, "He seems all right, but he is kind of small." Putin is slight and stiff and roughly five feet five inches to Yeltsin's hefty but graceful six feet two. Two weeks later, Putin was appointed prime minister, and a campaign to make him the next elected leader of Russia was launched, spearheaded by Berezovsky's Channel 1. He would be portrayed as young, energetic, decisive, determined, worldly, reform-minded, dependable—all

qualities for which Russia, exhausted and embarrassed by Yeltsin's provincialism and unpredictability, seemed to yearn.

Berezovsky has been living in exile in England for eight years. He has long since forfeited his television channel and much of his fortune. Moscow has issued a warrant for his arrest and has demanded that any country where he sets foot hand him over. Most Western countries warn Berezovsky that, should he choose to cross their borders, he will at the very least be temporarily detained. Great Britain, however, has given him political asylum, and Scotland Yard has done its best to ensure his safety, apprehending at least one suspected would-be assassin. A close Berezovsky ally, the former F.S.B. agent Alexander Litvinenko, died in the fall of 2006, after drinking tea contaminated by polonium-210, a rare radioactive substance that can be acquired almost exclusively from the Russian state; this past summer the BBC reported that British authorities had traced the murder directly to the Kremlin. Moscow has refused to extradite Litvinenko's suspected killer, and there has been no official Russian response to allegations that Litvinenko was killed on orders from the Kremlin. Berezovsky's closest friend and ally, the Georgian businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili, died suddenly in London earlier this year, at the age of 52. The apparent cause of death was a heart attack, but five months later the pathologist has still not issued a final report. A condition of my interview with Berezovsky is that I not disclose the precise location where it took place; as we talk, Berezovsky does not eat or drink anything, leaving me to tackle a large pot of tea on my own. He says that he expects his next would-be assassin to appear at any minute. Still, as he tells me the story of how Putin came to power, he seems to see nothing wrong either with the way the choice was made, by a tiny group of people, or with the criteria they applied. He still thinks it was a brilliant plan, just one that somehow went awry.

Ruling from the Shadows

Berezovsky would call me all the time to ask, "Isn't he fucking amazing?" recalls Nataliya Gevorkyan, who was drafted by Berezovsky, along with two other writers, to produce Putin's official biography in the run-up to the March 2000 presidential election. Gevorkyan was a star reporter at *Kommersant*, a daily newspaper then owned by Berezovsky, and the most experienced of the three writers; in the late 1980s and early 1990s she had spent five years reporting on Russia's secret police for the *Moscow News*, the flagship liberal newspaper at the time. "So I would say to him, 'Borya, the tragedy of your life is that you've never met a lieutenant colonel from the K.G.B. He is not fucking amazing. He is exactly like the rest of them.'"

The trio had three weeks to write the book. There was no time to do any real research in St. Petersburg, where the city archives presumably still held a lot of information on Putin's work as deputy mayor. (Those files appear to have been purged.) The book, originally envisioned as a biography, turned into a compilation of monologues—mostly by Putin, who sat for six interviews, but also by his elementary-school teacher, his best friend, his wife, and a few others. Though it remains the most voluminous source of information on Putin, the book is full of legends, half-truths, and outright lies. "I was curious who this character was who would be running the country," Gevorkyan tells me, explaining why she agreed to the project. "To be honest, he is by far not the most interesting person I've ever interviewed. He was no better and no worse than any of the K.G.B. officers I've interviewed—smarter than some of them and slier than some of them." She came away with the impression, as she says now, that he is "indecisive and not particularly courageous, and both respects and envies people who have real courage." She also noticed that he likes talking about himself, even though much of what he said could not be believed.

Here is what we know. Putin's parents, Maria and Vladimir, grew up in villages, were minimally educated, and were married at the age of 17. In the 1930s they had two sons, one of whom died in early childhood. Vladimir Putin the elder spent most of World War II at the front, where he was badly wounded. Maria Putina, the future president's mother, spent the war years in Leningrad, which was under siege for nearly 900 days. More than a million people perished, most of them victims of starvation and cold. The Putins' second son died during the siege. What made the Putins remarkable was that they both survived, and, seven years after the war, had another child. The fact that Vladimir Putin the younger was born when his parents were both 41, that his mother's health had been badly damaged by the hunger and hardships of the war, and that no one has been able to produce a source who remembers the Russian leader's early childhood has led to speculation that Putin was adopted. His parents would not have told him about it—adoption is only now becoming less of a shameful secret in Russia. If Putin spent his early years in an orphanage, this might go some way toward explaining his small stature and his lack of physical strength in childhood, though being born in the hungry postwar decade might be explanation enough.

A mediocre student, the young Putin seems to have been an aspiring thug. He was denied admission to the Young Pioneers, the Communist Party organization that rarely missed a child. All 10-year-olds were generally

inducted, and obligated to wear a red kerchief around their necks every school day until the age of 14. "I was no Pioneer," Putin told his biographers. "I was a hoodlum." Such was his presentation that one of the generally obsequious interviewers asked, "Are you being coy?" "That's insulting," Putin responded. "I really was a thug."

He must not have been a very good one, for as a pre-teen he felt compelled to take up martial arts. "I didn't aspire to being a leader," he explained. "I wanted to maintain my independence. And when I realized that the skills I'd picked up in the street weren't enough for this, I decided to take up sports." One of his elementary-school teachers, who gave a fawning interview, recalled that Putin wanted to learn martial arts "to be able to stand up for himself." In other words, the diminutive Putin was bullied as a child, probably by the very thugs he wanted to emulate. (Putin would eventually become a top judo fighter in Leningrad.)

But even the martial arts were not enough to protect him, and so, at the age of 13, having failed in his bid to become a hoodlum, Putin became a conformist. At this he excelled. He stopped getting 3s—the equivalent of a C on Russia's five-point scale. He was inducted into the Young Pioneers—three years late, but opening the way to join the youth group *Komsomol* the following year, which in turn opened the door to higher education. As soon as he joined the Pioneers, Putin became a leader of the school branch of the organization, taking up a nominally elected position for which students were in truth handpicked by adults behind the scenes—much the way he would become president of Russia 35 years later. And soon after that, he developed his life's single, overriding ambition: to become a secret agent.

I was most amazed by the way that a single person could accomplish something entire armies couldn't," Putin told the biographers. "A lone agent could rule the lives of thousands of people." He wanted to be a spy, and the reason he wanted to be a spy was that he was fascinated by the prospect of exerting an outside influence over people. He wanted to rule from the shadows.

Sometime around his 16th birthday Putin went to the Leningrad K.G.B. headquarters to say, "I want to work here." As he recounts the story, he was told two things: first, he had to serve in the military or graduate from college—preferably in law—before being drafted as a spy. Second, he could not just come in and volunteer—he had to wait to be asked. No K.G.B. agent, past or present, can be expected to disclose the circumstances under which he was drafted, so chances are his story is at best incomplete. It seems clear, however, that Putin linked his life inextricably to the K.G.B. a few years before he finished high school. "What kind of person wants to

Vladimir Putin

be a K.G.B. agent at the age of 15 or 16, when everyone else wants to be a cosmonaut?" asks Gevorkyan. She got her answer while she was still interviewing Putin for the book: "a mean, small-minded, and vengeful person."

The New Year's Telegram

It was the incident with the kidnapped journalist that led Gevorkyan to this view. On January 15, 2000—just 16 days after Putin became acting president—Andrei Babitsky, a Russian-language Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporter, went missing in Chechnya. His reports had been sympathetic to the Chechen cause and had enraged Putin, and word soon spread in Moscow media circles that Babitsky had in fact been kidnapped by the Russian military. Two weeks after his disappearance, the military acknowledged holding him in custody—and then, incredibly, it was announced that they had exchanged him for several Russian soldiers who had been captured by the separatists. A tape of Babitsky supposedly being handed over to masked Chechens was broadcast on national TV. A great deal of confusion surrounds the episode. The original idea was probably just to quietly "disappear" Babitsky, but then, as domestic and international concern became apparent, the plan seems to have shifted to staging his murder by a willing group of Chechens, some of whom had ties with Moscow. It was a cold-blooded effort to kill two birds with one stone: Babitsky's murder would demonstrate the cruelty of the Chechens and at the same time serve as a warning to anyone foolish enough to show any sympathy for them. At some point the plan would change again—to deliver Babitsky to the Chechens and the cameras in a chilling charade, letting him twist in uncertainty before eventually letting him go. Whatever the plan, the strings holding Babitsky's fate seem to have been held by a sole puppeteer.

This was at a time when Russian journalists had not yet grown accustomed to seeing their colleagues murdered, and outrage was still possible. Gevorkyan, who was enjoying three weeks of direct access to Putin as she interviewed him for the book, decided to confront him. "I said to him directly, 'The guy has children and a wife. You've got to put a stop to this thing.' And he said, 'Soon a car will deliver a videotape showing your friend is alive and well.' I said, 'Hello! You are supposed to have handed him over to the bandits? So this information comes directly from them then?' He didn't answer, and I ran out of the room to call his colleague so she would tell Andrei's wife he was still alive." Two hours later the colleague, at Radio Liberty, called Gevorkyan back: "You are not going to believe this," she said. "A car showed up at the bureau. They said they had a videotape of

Andrei, and we bought it off them for \$200." The tape showed that Babitsky was alive; he was released a few days later.

"I realized then that this was how he was going to rule the country," says Gevorkyan. "I realized that, shit, this was the way his mind worked. I had no illusions." What struck her almost as much as Putin's apparent involvement in the kidnapping scheme was the way the president talked about a man he had never met, of whom he knew only that he was sharply critical of the war in Chechnya: "It was undisguised hatred." Not long afterward Gevorkyan was offered the opportunity to move to Paris and open a newspaper bureau there; she accepted the offer at once, and lives there to this day. Babitsky lives in Prague. There is a thread that runs all through the Putin story: everyone who knows anything about him is living in exile or dead or working in the Russian government very close to the man himself.

One of those exiles, Marina Salye, now lives not in England or France but in a village in Russia, more than 100 miles from St. Petersburg. Throughout the 1990s, she was a leading liberal politician in St. Petersburg, one of only two women prominent on the national liberal political scene since *perestroika*. (The other, Galina Starovoitova, was shot dead in her apartment building in St. Petersburg in 1998.) In 1992, Salye headed a committee of the St. Petersburg City Council formed to investigate the activities of the deputy mayor, Vladimir Putin. After the committee presented the results of its investigation, the city council passed a resolution calling for the mayor to fire Putin and to have the prosecutor's office investigate apparent corruption and misappropriation of funds. The mayor ignored the recommendation. In early 2000, in the run-up to the presidential election, Salye campaigned against Putin, attempting to draw attention to the conclusions of her investigation.

Then, abruptly, she left St. Petersburg and effectively disappeared. Several people have told me why. Around New Year's Day 2001, they say, she received a holiday telegram from President Putin. "Here is wishing you good health," the telegram said, "and the opportunity to use it." The next day, she packed up and moved to the most obscure place she could find. Salye today won't speak publicly about this or anything else. The fact that this account of her disappearance is believed by many Russians active in liberal politics, including some who know Putin very well, speaks volumes about the way the former president is perceived: not only as small-minded and vengeful but also as vulgar and unsubtle.

Secret Agent with Washing Machine

Putin's penchant for vulgar jokes, offered in a way that makes it clear he is not really joking, has been on display ever since he came to prominence. In 1999, having only recently been appointed prime minister, he

promised to hunt terrorists down wherever they were found, and "if we find them in the toilet, they will be snuffed out there, in the outhouse." In September 2000, when Larry King asked Putin what had happened to the *Kursk* submarine, whose crew had died while Russian officials refused to allow Norwegian rescue teams near the site of the accident, Putin smiled like a mischievous schoolboy and said, "It drowned." In November 2002, during an E.U.-Russia summit, a French journalist asked a question about bombings affecting the civilian population of Chechnya. Putin responded by suggesting that the questioner was an "Islamic radical" who would do well to come to Russia to procure a circumcision, "and I'd recommend that the operation be performed in such a way that nothing will grow there ever again." In October 2006, during a meeting with Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, Putin commented on the sexual-harassment scandal that had brought down Israeli president Moshe Katsav. "Your president is a mighty man," he said. "He managed to rape 10 women! . . . We are all envious of him." Earlier this year, as tensions mounted between Russia and Georgia, the Georgian president, Mikheil Saakashvili, reminded Putin that Georgia had statements of support from the United States and Western Europe. Putin told Saakashvili with anatomical precision where he should stick those statements.

One has to wonder what it was that Vladimir Putin said to George W. Bush at their first meeting, in Slovenia in the summer of 2001, that prompted Bush to say he had gotten "a sense of his soul." More to the point, how did someone so uncouth get anywhere in the Soviet foreign-intelligence service? In fact, he did not get very far. For 10 years after graduating from Leningrad State University, in 1975, he did little more than push papers while studying at various K.G.B. schools, ending at a Moscow institute that prepared agents for work abroad. Putin was given intensive training in German, and at the end of the course was disappointed to learn that he would be sent to East Germany rather than West Germany—and not even to Berlin, but to Dresden, a provincial city of half a million people. This was not undercover work; the Putins even lived in a Stasi apartment building. A Soviet agent in Dresden was very far indeed from where the action was. When the Berlin Wall fell, in 1989, the K.G.B. agents retreated to the Soviet Union. Putin was recalled to Leningrad, not Moscow, which means he had been written off by his superiors.

Putin was now 37 years old. All he had to show for his five years of work abroad was a Volga, a Soviet-made car that his family had scrimped and saved to buy. Putin's wife has said that the Putins' other prized possession was a 20-year-old washing machine, given to them by German neighbors in Dresden.

Used up and all but spat out by the K.G.B., Putin had nonetheless been shaped by the agency. So it is not surprising that, 10 years later, when the K.G.B. colonel suddenly got a chance to reshape his country, he remade it in the likeness of what he had known and loved best: a rigidly hierarchical, tightly controlled system closed to outsiders.

His first job back in Russia was at Leningrad State University, where he became the president's assistant for foreign relations. He also started writing a doctoral dissertation on international law. But Putin did not work at the university long. In 1990 he became an assistant to the mayor of Leningrad, who would soon promote him to deputy mayor. Mikhail Gorbachev was in power now, and the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika* had begun. The Communist Party would soon be defunct. The mayor of St. Petersburg was a law professor named Anatoly Sobchak, a member of the pro-democracy faction of the Supreme Soviet. A former adviser to Sobchak recalls that the mayor, who had few connections outside the university, put together his city-hall team haphazardly, hiring people on the basis of a single recommendation or even a chance meeting in a university hallway. Sobchak was certainly wise enough to the ways of the K.G.B. to know that the university president's assistant was on the secret-police payroll. Indeed, this was precisely why he wanted to hire Putin: K.G.B. officers were coming into vogue among politicians and entrepreneurs looking for well-educated men trained in the arts of negotiation and information gathering. Many former K.G.B. officers ran the security services of newly formed private companies. Others founded security companies of their own.

Putin was himself in no hurry to leave the K.G.B., and he would continue to draw a K.G.B. salary—indeed, the salary was more than he earned at city hall. Before long Putin had made himself the mayor's point man for business of all sorts. In particular, he was attempting to gain control of the emerging gaming industry. In the end, he succeeded in securing for the city a 51 percent share of all of St. Petersburg's casinos—but this, he later claimed, did nothing for the city's coffers, because casino managers ran with the cash. Something similar, he said, also happened with federal credits the city was supposed to use to stimulate food imports in the early 1990s: he claimed that the private companies contracted by the city vanished with the money. The 1992 investigation by the Salye commission drew a different conclusion: the partnerships with private companies were structured in such a way as to siphon money with impunity. This was not the only allegation of misconduct leveled against Putin: in 1999 the St. Petersburg prosecutor's office launched an investigation into the alleged misappropriation of some \$4.5 million ear-

marked for reconstruction projects; the investigation was closed in August 2000, after Putin became president. One of the investigators on the case has since joined a monastery—another form of internal exile—while the other has retired. Everyone named by the investigation now has a top government position—including Russia's current president, Dmitry Medvedev, who, if the prosecutors are to be believed, was the man who actually engineered the transfers of earmarked funds.

Scorched Earth in St. Petersburg

It was as deputy mayor that Putin finally got to play the roles he had yearned for as a child: he was both a shadow ruler and a thug. Here he was, a buttoned-down bureaucrat, making and breaking businesses and careers, now allowing the future oligarch Berezovsky to open up a car dealership in St. Petersburg and magnanimously waving away a bribe, now grabbing a controlling share of all the casinos in the city. He made enemies, and these enemies apparently wanted to kill him. In 1994, Putin's wife's car was broadsided in a hit-and-run collision that everyone interpreted as an assassination attempt. Lyudmila Putina survived major spinal injuries, but her recovery took years. Putin began sleeping with a pump rifle, saying, "It may not save me, but it calms me down."

None of this was particularly unusual in the chaotic, crime-ridden Russia of the mid-1990s. Just as Putin had been an ordinary K.G.B. agent, he was apparently an ordinary city bureaucrat: smarter than some of them, more corrupt than others. There is no indication that he made a truly extraordinary amount of money at this time, though like virtually all city and state employees in Russia he lived better than his official municipal salary permitted—prompting an investigation into how he had acquired his dacha outside of St. Petersburg. If some or even all the claims of wrongdoing are true, by the standards of 1990s Russia, Putin was no more than a small-time crook in a large city. He just happened to be the only small-time crook to become the president of Russia.

Among his enemies were not only the casino owners and other businessmen Putin had squeezed but also, and perhaps more important, the elected city council and the media. These got in the way. Putin remained a believer in a single and clear line of command, so he perceived the city council as a meddling, annoying entity. "He had to deal with them on a daily basis," recalls Alexander Margolis, a historian who served as an adviser to Sobchak and worked closely with Putin. "It was like a potent inoculation against democracy."

Under Sobchak, Putin assumed primary responsibility for handling the media. His methods were heavy-handed. Anna Sharogradskaya, who has been running an independent press center in St. Petersburg for more

than 15 years, remembers that tactics ranged from plying journalists with favors—including such lavish gifts as apartments for newspaper editors in chief—to outright threats. When Sobchak was campaigning for re-election in 1996, says Sharogradskaya, the mayor's office shut down a television program that had been critical of him. The director and the host of the program, a married couple, scheduled a press conference at Sharogradskaya's center, but then the director called back to cancel: "He said, 'We can't do it, because we are getting threats and we are afraid something will happen to our daughter.'"

I did a fair amount of reporting from St. Petersburg in the 1990s, and I remember its atmosphere of fear and suspicion. I also taught journalism to college students there. All capable young journalists planned to move to Moscow, because in their own city, with its five million residents, there was no place to work. My notes from that period are filled with stories of people talking about being threatened and wiretapped—and they believed that the wiretapping was the work of the mayor's office. What had been a vibrant media scene at the start of the 1990s was now scorched earth.

Putin's friends from his time in St. Petersburg were few, but they would be richly rewarded. He would take virtually all his immediate co-workers to Moscow with him, and they would make up Russia's new political elite. His other friend was the K.G.B. itself and, in particular, a man named Viktor Cherkesov. In addition to being a friend of Putin's, Cherkesov carried the dubious distinction of launching, in 1989, what was probably the last criminal investigation into charges of "anti-Soviet propaganda." To this day, Cherkesov's name makes former dissidents from St. Petersburg cringe. Of all the odious investigators who inhabited that odious organization, he may have been the most memorably offensive—and he personally interrogated many of the former dissidents alive today. This was the man who was appointed to head the St. Petersburg branch of the F.S.K. (as the K.G.B. was first renamed) in 1992, an appointment believed to have been engineered by Putin. He became Putin's ally, helping him wage his business battles. When Putin became president and instituted the posts of presidential envoys to various parts of Russia, Cherkesov was dispatched to the Northwest—presumably to watch over Putin's old hunting ground, and, many observers believe, to ensure that as little information as possible about Putin's St. Petersburg past was ultimately preserved. Later, Putin made Cherkesov his drug czar, an appointment that gave him extraordinary legal and extra-legal enforcement powers.

In 1996, Putin ran Sobchak's re-election campaign. Sobchak lost. Almost immediately, the city prosecutor's office, fortified

Vladimir Putin

by 40 investigators from Moscow, launched a probe into corruption. Sobchak fled to France, using an elaborate scheme that involved a heart attack—probably faked—and a medical-evacuation jet. At least one member of his administration was arrested soon after; at least one other was killed, shot to death in broad daylight in the center of St. Petersburg. But Vladimir Putin made an uneventful transition to Moscow, as though airlifted by an invisible K.G.B. hand.

In Moscow, Putin held a series of jobs in Yeltsin's administration, rising in 1998 to first deputy chief of staff in charge of regions and in 1999 to head of the security service itself, now called the F.S.B. He also finally defended his dissertation, though he had switched his field to economics. Corruption was at play even here. It was eventually discovered, by researchers at the Brookings Institution, that entire chunks of his dissertation had been lifted verbatim from a Russian translation of a management text called *Strategic Planning and Policy*, written in 1978 by two University of Pittsburgh economists.

The \$40 Billion Reformer

It was in 1999 that the Family decided to take Putin and make him first the prime minister and then the president of Russia, presenting him as a young, worldly, energetic leader who would shepherd Russia into a bright future of economic reform and stable democracy. It was not as though the Family had taken the facts of Putin's biography and arranged them to create a narrative different from what I have offered. Rather, they treated him as a blank slate. Here was a man with no past, and he was the future of Russia. Incredibly, the people of Russia bought the story. "We said he was young, energetic, and would institute much-needed reforms," says Marina Litvinovich, who was a top manager at the think tank that ran Putin's campaign. "People were so tired of Yeltsin that this was easy to sell." Even more incredibly, Western leaders and the Western media bought the story, too.

Almost immediately, things started to go bad. In September 1999, less than a month after Putin was appointed prime minister, two apartment blocks in Moscow exploded, killing more than 200 people. Another building blew up in the southern city of Volgograd, and an explosion was narrowly averted in Ryazan, a town a few hours outside Moscow. Russians both recoiled in collective horror and came together in the way of a nation grieving. They yearned for common cause and retribution. This cause became a renewed war effort against separatists in Chechnya, whom Putin blamed for the attacks, promising to snuff them out "in the outhouse."

It was not until months later, when the ini-

tial panic had abated, that several journalists and political activists began trying to unravel the trail of the apartment-block explosions. The foiled one, in Ryazan, provided the clues. Local residents had noticed three large sacks, labeled "sugar," under the stairway of the Ryazan building; eyewitnesses recalled seeing similar sacks in the Moscow buildings that had blown up days earlier. The residents called the police, who identified the contents as explosives and also found detonation devices set to go off at 5:30 A.M. They quickly apprehended the men who had delivered the sacks; the men, in turn, identified themselves as F.S.B. agents. A series of confusing announcements followed. Ryazan authorities rushed to reassure the public that what the police had found was in fact sugar. F.S.B. headquarters in Moscow said the whole episode had been a top-secret training exercise. The Ryazan branch of the F.S.B. countered that it knew nothing about such an exercise. When the dust settled, many believed that the F.S.B. had engineered the September explosions. Putin called these allegations "utter nonsense."

When I ask Berezovsky about all this, he gives me contradictory responses. He says that at the time he was convinced the explosions were the work of Chechen separatists, and realized only months later that the F.S.B. was probably behind them. He says, naturally, that he knew nothing of the bombing plot to destroy the buildings. He also says it was hastily cooked up by the F.S.B., to give the newly elevated Putin a popularity boost. Whether Berezovsky is telling the truth about his own ignorance is immaterial. The question is: Is there any way that Putin himself would not have known of such a secret-police operation? Not only had he been running the F.S.B., he had already replaced virtually its entire leadership with his friends and colleagues from St. Petersburg, including Cherkesov.

On December 31, 1999, Yeltsin resigned, making Putin the acting president and giving him an additional advantage in what would now be early elections. Putin refused to campaign or participate in debates. In March he was elected president. In May he was inaugurated, and within days the backward evolution of Russia began. Special forces raided the offices of Most Media, the largest private media company. (Full disclosure: I was working at the time for a magazine owned by Most.) Putin signed a decree launching the eradication of Russia's federal structure: he placed seven appointed presidential overlords atop the country's 89 elected governors. In the years that followed, Putin engineered a state takeover of all television channels and most radio stations and newspapers. He eliminated all direct elections with the exception of the presidential one, which has become a farce. He effectively instituted military rule: The percentage of uniformed officers in top federal

positions grew from 13 percent to 42 percent—and many of the rest are non-uniformed secret agents. Finally, he launched an attack on Russia's oligarchs, who were forced to give their assets up to the state or to Putin's allies; many Russian businessmen now live in exile, and at least two—Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev, the former owners of the country's largest oil producer, Yukos—are behind bars.

What has driven Putin's attacks on the Russian rich? Almost certainly he believes that it is in the best interests of the state to concentrate the country's wealth—and to control it. Almost certainly he envies and resents the Jewish entrepreneurs who amassed great amounts of money, bought Côte d'Azur villas, oceangoing yachts, and European football teams, while he struggled to obtain enough to build a two-story summerhouse outside of St. Petersburg. And almost certainly he has benefited handsomely from the process of re-distributing the money. The topic of Putin's wealth was taboo until recently, but in late 2007, what was probably a Kremlin power struggle produced an information leak; it is now widely believed that Putin has amassed a personal fortune of \$40 billion.

Since rising to the top, Putin has developed a penchant for expensive suits and expensive watches, though in other ways his tastes seem to have remained provincial. He favors mostly plain Russian food (but has acquired a love of sushi). As behooves a would-be secret agent, his license plate bears James Bond's serial number. He also owns a 1950s Soviet-made Volga, a classic car now popular among the hip Russian set—except that Putin's has a modern BMW engine, making the car utterly unhip but perfect as a symbol of the Putin era: speeding ahead under false pretenses. Women who have spent time around Putin—including those who have been in the presidential press pool—describe him as an insecure, lustful man, very much like an overgrown adolescent boy: he would be yours for the taking, but what would you do with him? Over the years of his presidency, Putin's wife, a former flight attendant, has gradually faded from the public eye—in part, it would seem, because her public statements sometimes embarrassed the Kremlin. In an authorized biography published in 2002, she cited (with apparent resignation) her husband's views that "a woman must do everything in the home" and that "you should not praise a woman, otherwise you will spoil her," and she revealed that Putin forbade her to have a credit card. In this way too, Putin has taken Russian political culture back to the pre-Gorbachev era, when First Ladies stayed in the background.

Disillusionment came to Putin's Russian allies faster than to his friends in the West. Berezovsky says he last saw Putin in August 2000, soon after the *Kursk* submarine disaster, when Putin was demanding that Berezovsky cede control of his television channel.

Berezovsky recounts the conversation: "He says, 'But you asked me yourself. You asked me to become president.' I say, 'Volodya, I asked you because I thought you'd continue what Yeltsin was doing. You are doing the opposite. You have just said to me, 'Give me the television channel.' What do you mean, give it to you?' And he says, 'I'm going to manage it myself, you understand? I'm going to manage it myself.' And I say, 'That's not going to happen!'"

But that is indeed what happened.

Government by Heart Attack?

Everyone has a moment of truth. Litvinovich, the woman who had helped fashion Putin's public image in the first place, says she decided to escape from his orbit following the *Kursk* disaster. She had attended a Kremlin meeting during which three of the president's advisers—she among them—struggled to persuade him to interrupt his vacation on the Black Sea coast and fly north to speak to the families of the submarine crew. "It seemed he had no human feelings," recalls Litvinovich. "He had no compassion, he felt no pain. I had always thought that if a person became a president, even if he was installed as one by others, then the responsibility should change him. And if your nation is crying, you too should cry." Putin did not cry. Indeed, Putin did not change: throughout his years of K.G.B. training, his superiors would note his extreme emotional reserve, a flattened affect even—a trait that may be both useful and dangerous for a secret agent but is disastrous in a president. Litvinovich notes that Putin has never met with survivors of the 2002 Moscow theater siege, a three-day nightmare instigated by Chechen separatists that left more than 120 dead; she notes also that he visited the survivors of the 2004 Beslan school siege, another Chechen act, this one claiming more than 300 lives, only under cover of night. "It's because that time we convinced him to fly to meet with the *Kursk* families, they screamed at him," Litvinovich says. She says she herself has been threatened on numerous occasions. In 2006 she was attacked in the center of Moscow and beaten senseless; the attackers did not take any of her possessions.

The last liberal to leave Putin was his economic adviser, Andrei Illarionov, who resigned in December 2005 and published a scathing critique of the administration. "It is one thing to work in a country that is partially free," he wrote. "It is another thing when the country loses all political freedom. . . . The very nature of the state has changed."

My own moment of truth came long ago. Between February and August 2000, I wrote a series of three op-ed pieces in *The New York Times* arguing that Putin would return Russia to an us-against-the-world mentality, that he would send his enemies to rot in jail,

and that he had a Communist bureaucrat's rather than a national leader's mind-set. I was blacklisted—banned from all Kremlin press conferences and federal television channels. I remember sitting in a Moscow restaurant in the early spring of 2000, speaking with Alex Goldfarb, a former dissident who had been living in New York since the 1970s but traveling to Moscow frequently since *perestroika*, acting as an adviser to the philanthropist George Soros and to a number of non-governmental organizations. He was much taken with the effort to create and aid the new president. I was telling him that Putin would reshape the country to resemble the K.G.B., and that he would do to Russia what he had done to the best of his ability in St. Petersburg: kill the media, emasculate the representative branch, and create an atmosphere where threats and blackmail were commonplace and murders and disappearances were regular occurrences. I was not a fortune-teller: I had simply been covering St. Petersburg for too many years.

In particular, I had been covering the case of Dmitry Rozhdestvensky, a television executive who had been a close ally of Putin's and was his partner in running Sobchak's reelection campaign in 1996. When Putin fled St. Petersburg for Moscow and Sobchak fled to Paris on a medevac plane, Rozhdestvensky remained behind, a ready target for the probe into corruption in Sobchak's regime. Rozhdestvensky was jailed in 1998, first on a tax-evasion charge and then on an embezzlement charge. What I found interesting was that Cherkesov had been instrumental in bringing about Rozhdestvensky's arrest, and that the detective assigned to his case was Yuri Vanyushin, a university classmate of Putin's. It was as though Putin, now making his career in Moscow, wanted to ensure there was no one left in St. Petersburg who knew too much. Rozhdestvensky's mother did not believe in my conspiracy theories: she believed her son would get out of prison as soon as Putin became president. He did not. Instead, his case was used to briefly jail the media magnate Vladimir Gusinsky, who was released after three days in return for signing over his media empire to the state. Gusinsky left the country. When I was in the process of writing a story about his arrest, for the newsweekly *Izvestia*, the detective Vanyushin threatened me over the phone: "You'll be sorry," he said. "There is a lot of dirty stuff happening these days."

Rozhdestvensky was released in 2000 for health reasons pending a trial. The trial ended in 2002. He died four months later, officially from a heart attack. His mother believes he was poisoned. A friend who spoke on condition of anonymity says that Rozhdestvensky exhibited strange, debilitating symptoms in the days and hours leading up to his death—

less like a heart attack and more like a poisoning. Heart attacks and poisonings are part of the background of association with Putin. As it happens, almost everyone who might say anything about the Rozhdestvensky case is dead: his business partner and even detective Vanyushin are dead, from heart attacks. So is the man who once stood at the center of this story, Mayor Sobchak.

Sobchak died suddenly, in 2000. He had returned to Russia after Putin became acting president: now he could count not only on immunity from prosecution but, observers believed, on a top government appointment as well. One day in late February, Putin asked Sobchak urgently to fly to Kaliningrad to campaign for him. Sobchak died that night. His St. Petersburg doctor, Yuri Shevchenko, a friend of the Putin family's, announced that Sobchak had died of a heart attack—supposedly his fourth. Shevchenko was soon appointed federal minister of health.

A few months later, Polina Ivanushkina, a 19-year-old reporter for a Moscow weekly, traveled to Kaliningrad, assigned to find Putin's mother-in-law, who lived there, and perhaps also write a few words about Sobchak's death. Ivanushkina ended up interviewing the pathologist who had examined Sobchak's body. She says he told her he had seen no indication that Sobchak had ever had a heart attack, much less had died of one. He concluded the cause of death was cardiac arrest, possibly resulting from consuming certain kinds of medication and alcohol at the same time. Several people who are close to Sobchak's widow, Lyudmila Narusova, have told me she believes her husband was killed. Narusova is now a senator—an appointed post under the new regime. When I asked her recently whether she thought her husband had died of natural causes, she said simply, "I don't want to talk about it"—a remarkable response, since she had taken liberties with the facts while answering my other questions.

But Russia is, after all, a country where men die young, often of heart attacks. It is conceivable that the pattern of men conveniently dropping dead is a set of tragic coincidences. But there is another pattern: the poisonings. In March 2003, Yuri Shchekochikhin, a 53-year-old journalist and political activist, died in the government's hospital in Moscow, following a week of bizarre, violent symptoms; the Kremlin doctors diagnosed his condition as an allergy, but his colleagues believe he was murdered. Shchekochikhin had been investigating the apartment-block explosions. In September 2004, 42-year-old Roman Tsepov, the head of a St. Petersburg security company and a onetime close ally of Putin and his circle, died in a Yekaterinburg hospital of apparent poisoning with an unidentified radioactive substance. His symptoms were similar to those of Alexander Lit-

Vladimir Putin

vinenko, the former F.S.B. agent who died in a London hospital in November 2006.

My old acquaintance Alex Goldfarb and I now have our friendly meetings in France. Goldfarb has not been able to return to Russia since 2001, after he helped Litvinenko enter Great Britain, which ultimately gave him political asylum. Litvinenko had run afoul of the secret police in 1998, when he exposed an alleged F.S.B. plot to assassinate Berezovsky. He compounded his crime by fleeing to the West, and sealed his fate when he co-authored a book in which he argued that the F.S.B. had been behind the apartment-block explosions. Now Goldfarb has written a book about Litvinenko called *Death of a Dissident*. The book has been translated into 20 languages. No Russian publisher has dared to print it.

Goldfarb lays out the arguments for why he believes it was not just the Kremlin but Putin himself who was behind Litvinenko's murder. "To set something like this in motion, you need a top-level decision," says Goldfarb. "Even back in the U.S.S.R., it was the Cen-

tral Committee that approved plans to kill someone outside the country. So who needs it at the top level? Someone who wields power over both the F.S.B. and the nuclear agency. Bear in mind that polonium has a half-life of four months, so this thing had to be well planned and coordinated. And yet it was a crime of passion. It was his [Putin's] hatred of Sasha [Litvinenko] because he was a traitor."

I ask Goldfarb whether he believes Putin is also personally responsible for other political murders that have occurred on his watch. He does not, because he does not see Putin as capable of quite enough passion for so many crimes. But I remember what Gevorkyan told me about Putin's unbridled hatred for the journalist Babitsky, whom he had never met. I think of her description of him as "mean, small-minded, and vengeful." I think of his open loathing and contempt for Georgia's president. I think also of Litvinovich's description of Putin as devoid of human feeling. In a country where blood has long flowed freely, someone like this, when endowed with almost unlimited power, could kill a lot of people and never stop being the bland conformist he always

was. We have long understood that evil can be banal. It turns out that evil can be bland, too.

But here is the thing about Vladimir Putin. He has never been much of a secret agent. He has never, that is, made a secret of his agenda. Back in 2000, when speaking to his biographers, he was open about his plan to centralize power in Russia and to eliminate gubernatorial elections. In December 2000, addressing a celebratory gathering of F.S.B. brass, Putin declared, as if it were a joke, "I would like to report that a group of agents planted in the government is carrying out its assignment!" He was not really kidding. More recently, Putin has made two sets of important public statements. Speaking at a rally in Moscow in November 2007, he said he would continue his campaign against Russian politicians and entrepreneurs from the 1990s. And speaking at a security conference in Munich in February 2007, Putin indicated that Russia had no intention of cooperating with NATO and would not hesitate to use force to protect its interests. He was not kidding this time, either. □

Ilya Kolmanovsky contributed to the research for this article.

Marilyn Monroe



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 335 Bob's too, about what you have been doing at Camp . . . I have missed you something awful. . . . But Janie, I really am trying to be a good dog—one that you would be proud of. . . . I haven't even set one of my four feet on any of the flowers that Daddy and Marilyn planted and I just love them. I sit in the sunshine just smelling them.

Neither letters from Arthur Miller, at one time said to have been contained in a locked brown suitcase, nor letters from DiMaggio have ever turned up. If such letters did exist, where are they now? Perhaps Lee Strasberg returned them to their authors, or Inez or her sister-in-law, Ruth, might have sold them.

But what does exist in the archive is an undated, typed transcript that seems to be recounting Arthur Miller's musings about Marilyn. He recalls their first meeting, sometime in 1951, and goes on to describe her as

a blessing in his life: "As a result of knowing her, I have become more of myself." He describes their domestic life together, noting that she is a perfectionist, an inspired gardener, and "a marvelous cook, even though she never had any training."

He also observes, "The extraordinary thing about her is that she always sees things as though for the first time." It was her sense of wonder that made her so alive to millions of moviegoers, he believes. Miller considers it a misfortune that Monroe never had a great role to play, a dilemma he set out to correct with his screenplay *The Misfits*. "I did not write it specifically for her," he notes, but he describes the role of Roslyn, the child-like divorcée Monroe embodies so passionately in the 1961 film, as a difficult part that would challenge the greatest actresses. "But I do not think of anybody who could do it the way Marilyn would," he adds.

Miller had a profound influence on his wife, reflected in a receipt found in the archive. It was not "Marilyn Monroe" who had walked into Martindale's Book Store in Beverly Hills and bought *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* in three volumes; it was "Marilyn Monroe Miller." She was proud of being the wife of one of America's most respected intellectuals.

Also found in the archive is a letter from Grace Goddard that describes Gladys's confusion and paranoia: "She thinks she was sent to State Hospital because years ago she

voted on a Socialist Ballot. . . . Sleeps with her head at the foot of bed so as not to look at Marilyn's picture—they disturb her. . . . Wishes she never had had a sexual experience so she could be more Christ like." Also preserved is an envelope addressed by Gladys to Christian Science Nursing in Boston, containing three razor blades. Why had Monroe kept these reminders of her mother's mental illness?

There is a letter from Inez Melson to Joe DiMaggio, dated September 6, 1962—a month after Monroe's death—which questions the circumstances surrounding her last will. She asks DiMaggio to help her find out where Marilyn went on January 14, 1961, "the date on which our baby purportedly executed her will," by tracking down car-rental charges. "I know it sounds like a 'Perry Mason' television script but I am (between thee and me) very suspicious about that will."

Marilyn never completely stopped caring about DiMaggio. In a letter found on a dresser top or in a drawer near her bed (she often jotted down her thoughts on fragments of paper before going to sleep), she wrote, "Dear Joe, If I can only succeed in making you happy—I will have succeeded in the biggest [*sic*] and most difficult thing there is—that is to make *one person completely happy*." Lois Banner believes, however, that the DiMaggio letter "proves nothing. Marilyn had a major habit of telling people what they wanted to hear."